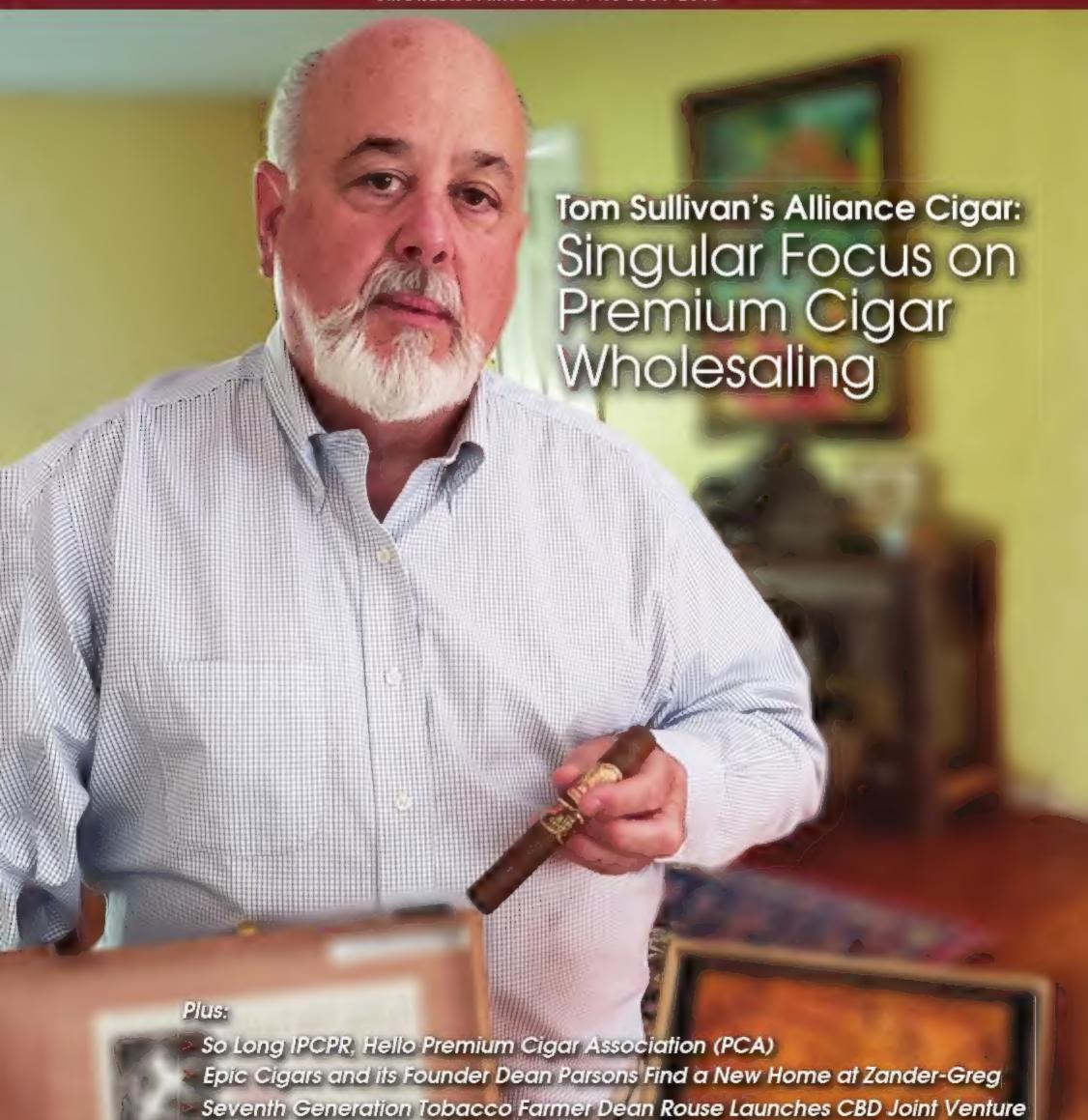
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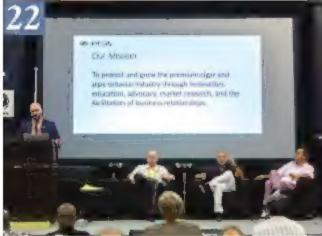
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Editor's LETTER



Premium Cigar Association (PCA) Ushers in an Important New Era, Kinks to Be Expected

Big change rarely arrives without some kinks to iron out.

Those on the inside and those with their ears to the ground may have known that the industry's premium tobacco trade association had some major developments on the horizon, ready to unveil at the 2019 trade show in Las Vegas in June, but for the majority of the industry, the wave of change came mostly as a surprise. Yes, news about two major facets of the developments-the association was re-branding, from the International Premium Pipe & Cigar Retailers Association (IPCPR) to the Premium Cigar Association (PCA), and the fact that the association planned to add a consumer level of membership and consumer day to next year's trade show-broke online a week before the show. With few details and no context, it sent PCA into defensive mode.

The name change garnered widespread support.

And the extensive slate of new services—a new website, web-based products, education events, changes to the PAC, a print magazine -will no doubt all sink in over time. It was a ton of information to absorb.

But the juxtaposition of consumers and trade belonging to the same association raised eyebrows. The prospect of the world's largest consumer cigar event, CigarCon, being added to one of the days of trade show set off a mini panic.

"One thing we want to be crystal clear on, this is not consumers coming to the trade show," said PCA executive director Scott Pearce. "What we are doing is leveraging the beauty, the grandeur, the size, scope, excitement, energy. All the stuff that manufacturers put into that show floor presents the best venue

PCA did an admirable job in Las Vegas trying to explain its thinking, but from Smokeshop Magazine's perspective the vast majority of retailers and manufacturers were either in a "we need more information" mode, or in downright disagreement with many aspects of the arguments being presented. Others asked tons of questions raising issues they felt hadn't been considered by the association. CigarCon quickly seemed to progress from a firm "done deal with details to follow," to "an idea for which we're soliciting input."

There was plenty of input to be heard, both at the show and afterwards. By late August, PCA announced that CigarCon 2020 wouldn't happen, and that the association was "considering" CigarCon 2021.

The re-branding is one part of a much larger effort to become a more effective, more proactive trade association, which has pinpointed the crucial need for the premium cigar and premium tobacco industry to "tell its story" more clearly to the legislators and regulators who know little if anything about it, yet pull all the strings with the industry's welfare, livelihood, and future hanging in the balance. The industry needs to pick up its game, and PCA has the blueprint.

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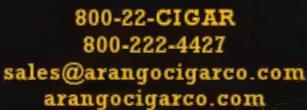
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Industry NEWS *** PRODUCTION, DISTRIBUTION, REGULATION, TRADE

Kretek International Defeats Key Cuban Motions in "Cuban Rounds" Trademark Proceedings

MOORPARK, CAUF .- The United States Trademark Office's Trademark Trial and Appeal Board

denied motions made by two Cuban state tobacco companies to dismiss Kretek International Inc.'s claims for cancellation of 10 trademark registrations. The board now determines whether the Cuban companies can own U.S. trademark registrations for brands the Cuban companies are legally prohibited from using in the U.S. under the embargo.

Kretek, the largest importer, marketer, and distributor of specialty tobacco products in America, seeks to register its Cuban Rounds brand with the U.S. Trademark Office. The Cuban Rounds cigar brand, which are rolled and bunched using Cuban methods, utilizing Cuban seed tobaccos from Nicaragua and the Dominican Republic, have been sold in the U.S. for over 14 years.



The brand represents a significant product line for domestic tobacconists, convenience, and food/drug

mass retailers, with approximately 8 million cigars sold in these channels.

In November 2017, two Cuban state tobacco companies opposed Kretek's Cuban Rounds applications, citing their ownership of several trademark registrations as one basis for the Trademark Board to reject the applications. Those same Cuban companies filed a similar action asking the Trademark Board to revoke a previously-issued registration for Kretek's Havana Bay brand.

In response to these actions, and to protect consumer confusion regarding the source of Cuban Rounds and Havana Bay cigars and accessories in the U.S., Kretek challenged the validity of the Cuban companies' registrations for various words and designs.

► FDA Proposes Graphic New Health Warnings for Cigarettes

SILVER SPRING, MD.—The U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) issued a proposed rule on Aug. 15 to require new health warnings on cigarette packages and in advertisements to "promote greater public understanding of the negative health consequences of smoking."

The proposed warnings, which feature photo-realistic color images depicting some of the "lesser-known, but serious health risks of cigarette smoking," would represent the most significant change to cigarette labels in more than 35 years. To address these gaps in public understanding, the FDA says it undertook ■ science-based approach to develop and evaluate the new proposed cigarette health warnings.

When finalized, the rule would fulfill a requirement in the Family Smoking Prevention and Tobacco Control Act and complement "additional work the FDA is undertaking to advance the health of America's families," the agency said.

Health warnings first appeared on cigarette packages in 1966 and were most recently updated in 1984 to include the







Surgeon General's warnings that appear on packages and in ads today. The FDA says the 13 proposed new warnings, accompanied by 13 corresponding full-color photo-realistic images, focus on serious health risks that are lesser-known by the public as being negative health consequences of smoking.

Once finalized, new warnings would appear prominently on cigarette packages and in ads, occupying the top 50 percent of the area of the front and rear panels of cigarette packages and at least 20 percent of the area at the top of cigarette advertisements. The warnings would be required to appear on packages and in ads 15 months after a final rule is issued.

Bits & Pieces

- > Imperial Brands PLC, which announced in April its intention to sell it worldwide premium cigar business by May 2020, told the Financial Times in August that its holdings had attracted "significant interest" and it expected to make an announcement on its sale in the next 12 weeks.
- > The city of Dayton, Ohio has implemented a new policy to no longer hire workers who smoke or vape tobacco or other nicotine products. Job candidates will be tested for nicotine during their application screening process and will have to participate in cessation treatment. Workers will be fired if they test positive at the end of their "probationary period." Currently employees will only be tested only for "reasonable suspicion" and will be fired if they test positive twice. Nearly 30 states currently have worker protections regarding lawful off-duty activities.
- > Imperial Brands PLC announce a research and development partnership with Auxly Cannabis Group Inc., a listed Canadian cannabis company. As part of the transaction Imperial will invest \$93.5 million by way of a convertible debenture and grant Auxly global licenses to its vaping technology and access to its innovation business Nerudia.



PREMIUM CIGARS

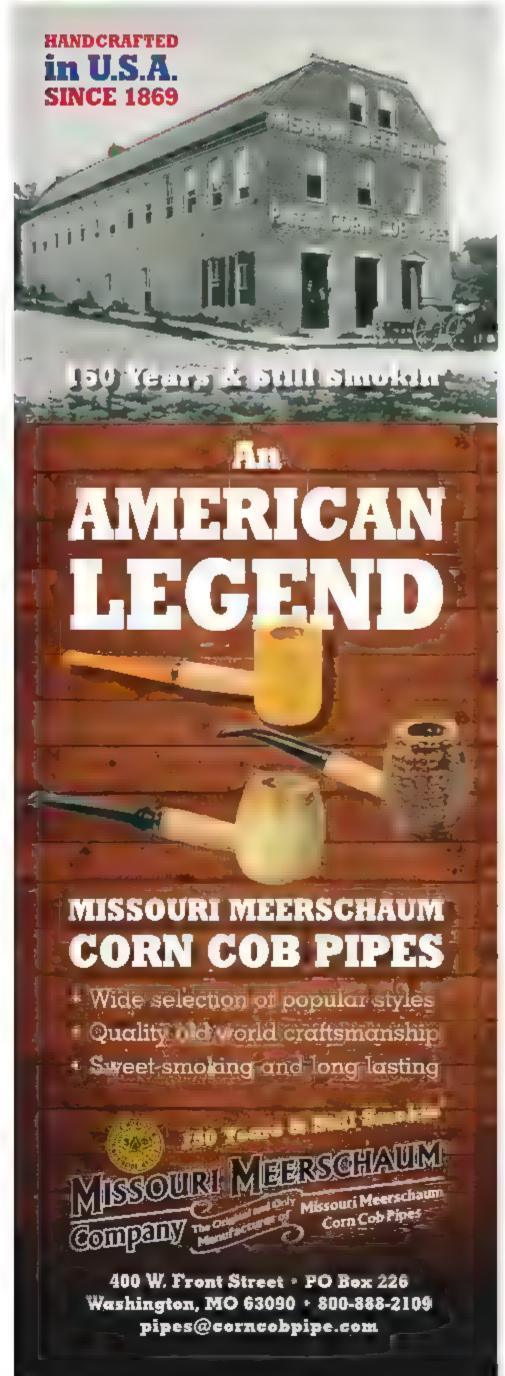
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Industry

Personnel Moves

> Perdomo Cigars has announced the promotion of Nicholas Perdomo, III. to national director of sales. After graduating from the University of Miami, Perdomo joined the in-house sales team and worked closely with the retailers daily. He has traveled with many of the sales representatives



Perdomo III

visiting shops and meeting retailers face-to-face. "Nicholas is open-minded, passionate and persistent," states vice president, Arthur Kemper. "We have worked closely together over the years to develop sales programs to help our retail partners be more successful with our brands. Nicholas' intrinsic respect for others is his greatest asset and shows his maturity beyond his years."

- > Filippo Costi has joined Maya Selva Cigars as chief commercial officer. Costi holds a doctorate in Architecture and Urban. Design from Politecnico di Milano, Italy, and previously worked in the luxury watch and jewelry industry, bringing "a great deal of professional experience in the areas of customer service, management, marketing and sales," according to the company. Costi's passion for cigars began in the early 1990s in Spain, and grew during several visits to Havana, Cuba, where he learned about the craftsmanship and the art of blending a great cigar.
- > Rob Norris, head of Altadis U.S.A., has accepted a transfer to Fontem Ventures as General Manager of Canada. Altadis U.S.A. is a unit of Tabacalera USA, Imperial Brands' premium cigar division in the United States. Fontem Ventures is another, separate Imperial Brands company. Norris has been with Imperial Brands for more than 20 years and has held ■ variety of increasingly responsible leadership positions, having joined the Altadis U.S.A. unit in 2011 as national sales and trade marketing director in 2011. He's also led JR Cigars as CEO and most recently served as the head of Altadis U.S.A.

Altadis also has announced reporting line changes as a result of Norris's new position. Reporting directly to Tabacalera USA's president & c.e.o. Javier Estades are Paul Waller, head of sales for Altadis and Oliver Hyams, head of trade marketing for Altadis.

> A.J. Fernandez Cigars has appointmed Steven Kron as the company's new International Sales Director. Effective Sept. 1, the company will handle all their own sales directly and will no longer be a part of the NyB distribution network. Prior to joining A.J. Fernandez, Kron served as the International Sales direc-

tor at NyB Cigars, a role he held since March 2017. Prior to that, Kron served as Head of Dunhill Cigars at British American Tobacco for over 15 years. Kron's "wealth of experience and knowledge of the industry makes him the ideal choice for the expansion of AJF's International sales in Europe, Middle East, Africa, and Asia," said A.J. Fernandez in a statement.



Calendar

SEPTEMBER 20-22, 2019

20th Greater Kansas City Pipe & Tobacco Show

Argosy Casino Hotel Spa & Casino, Riverside, Mo. Exhibit hall, smoking tent, CIPC pipe smoking contest, pipe care and refurbishing clinic, silent auction, carving contest. Contact: Greater Kansas City Pipe Club, Email: admin@gkcpipeclub.com, Web: gkcpipeclub.com.

SEPTEMBER 20-22, 2019 InterTabac/InterSupply 2019

Messe Westfalenhallen Exhibition Centre, Dortmund, Germany. Web: intertabacide.

OCTOBER 5, 2019

2019 Pipe Smoker's Gathering at Sutliff Tobacco

Sutliff Tobacco Company, Richmond, Va., co-presented with Conclave of Richmond Pipe Smokers (CORPS). Admission \$5, CORPS members free. Smoking permitted. Factory tours, social smoking tent, live post show entertainment, blending seminars, food trucks serving lunch and dinner. Web: conclaveofrichmondpipesmokers.org.

NOVEMBER 9-10, 2019

11th Annual West Coast Pipe Show

Palace Station Hotel & Casino, Las Vegas, Nev. Hosted by Steve O'Neill and Marty Pulvers. Smoking friendly exhibit hall with adjacent lounge with full bar. For table reservations and information, contact: Steve O'Neill, Email: steve@westcoastpipeshow.com, Web: westcoastpipeshow.com.

NOVEMBER 20-22, 2019

1st China International Cigar Expo (ICE)

Shenzhen Convention and Exhibition Center, Shenzhen, China. Hosted by China Cigarette Sales Corporation and Shenzhen Municipal Tobacco Company Inc., organized by Shenzhen Tobacco Import & Export Co., Ltd. Web: cigarambassador.com.

JANUARY 21-25, 2020

Puro Sabor 2020 Nicaraguan Cigar Festival

Managua, Granada, and Esteli, Nicaragua, Contact: Nicaraguan Chamber of Tobacco (CNT), Email: nicaraguancigarfestival.com, Web: nicaraquancigarfestival.com.

JANUARY 29-31, 2020

Tobacco Plus Expo (TPE) 2020

Las Vegas Convention Center, Las Vegas, Nev. Tobacco, vape, alternative, and general merchandise show; industry tracks including conferences and round tables. Web: tobaccoplusexpo.com.

FEBRUARY 16-21, 2020 Procigar Festival 2020

La Romana and Santiago de los Caballeros, Dominican Republic. Premium cigar festival featuring cigar factory and tobacco farm tours, seminars and tastings, excursions, dinner parties, golf tournament, poker tournament, and charity auction. Contact: ProCigar, Web: procigar.org.

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The Benefits of Specializing in Premium Cigars

For over two decades, Long Island-based Alliance Cigar has been striving to be the industry's premier cigar wholesaler, focusing on helping small retailers build category sales. > BY E. EDWARD HOYT III

or Tom "Sully" Sullivan, founder Cigar, the past 22 years at the helm of his family's premium cigar distribution business have represented the fruits of a calculated gamble, having taken a chance in pursing a dream while leaving behind the security and comfort of an established career.

At the time, Sullivan was already well entrenched in his degreed career of accounting and finance and working for global powerhouse Ernst & Young. His first exposure to the world of tobacco had come from one of his bigger clients there, United States Tobacco Company. Account work had Sullivan spending time with the tobacco company's marketing teams, and while he had absolutely no prior knowledge of the tobacco industry, he was a big U.S. history buff he was quickly enamored by the rich traditions of USTC brands like Copenhagen and Skoal, or intrigued by production processes like cigar wrapper bobbin operations in Honduras for Pennsylvania-based House of Windsor.

"I had figured I would be in finance for my entire career," Sullivan recalls, but by 1990, he had joined United States Tobacco Company directly, charged with forming an international division and taking the company's business global, developing core brand markets. In the beginning he was working principally in the finance operations, but over time was tied more closely with the marketing, sales, and product development sides of the business. Always passionate about his work, Sullivan brought the same dedicated approach that had defined his success in finance to his evolving roles in other company operations.

Seeing the manufacturing side of the tobacco industry was ■ "cataclysmic moment," Sullivan recalls, one that fueled his growing personal interest in premium cigars.

After 15 years at USTC, Sullivan moved to Wall Street to work as a Investment Banker, but by late 1997 he was ready to take the plunge, deciding to go into business and starting Alliance Cigar with the express focus of catering to small businesses.

category." That focus is something the business has held strong to for its entire 22 years, despite plenty of opportunities to diversify.

The company participated in its first industry trade show, known then as the Retail Tobacco Dealers of America (RTDA), in 1999 in Las Vegas, selling cigars from a only a few manufacturers to brick and mortar retailers initially in New York, New Jersey, and Connecticut. The business wasn't an overnight success, but from his prior experience Sullivan understood how to finance a new company and had a plan in place; he was also fortunate to have done well enough at UST and on Wall Street to weather a slow start and to pursue a deep knowledge of the premium brands he was distributing. Early on, he had the opportunity to visit cigar factories, embracing the product as an historical art form, not merely a manufactured commodity. It was a striking contrast to the high tech

> I knew I wanted to build my own company, and having worked for two really magnificent, global enterprises, I wanted to experience the entrepreneurship in a family business-type environment, and in particular in the premium cigar industry, which I'd developed a great passion and love for.

"I knew I wanted to build my own company," Sullivan explains, "and having worked for two really magnificent, global enterprises, I wanted to experience the entrepreneurship in a family business-type environment, and in particular in the premium cigar industry, which I'd developed a great passion and love for."

STARTING SMALL, WITH A FOCUSED VISION

Having dealt in the past primarily with distributors who handled a broad range of merchandise from OTP, candy, and sundries, Sullivan was eager to focus on a single merchandise segment, he explains, "and bring a certain level of clarity, if you will, to just the premium cigar automation used in Skoal and Copenhagen production.

"In Honduras, each plant was placed by hand in the field, just like grandma's tomato garden," Sullivan marveled, noting it was the "total opposite" of mass production OTP. Although premium cigar manufacturers were businesses, they were businesses of passion, Sullivan realized, and that the passionate cigar makers he had befriended early in his business were clearly married to the leaf.

"Put a seed in ground, three years later, it's a wonderful cigar," he says with as much admiration of the process today as he had the first time he visited a farm and factory.

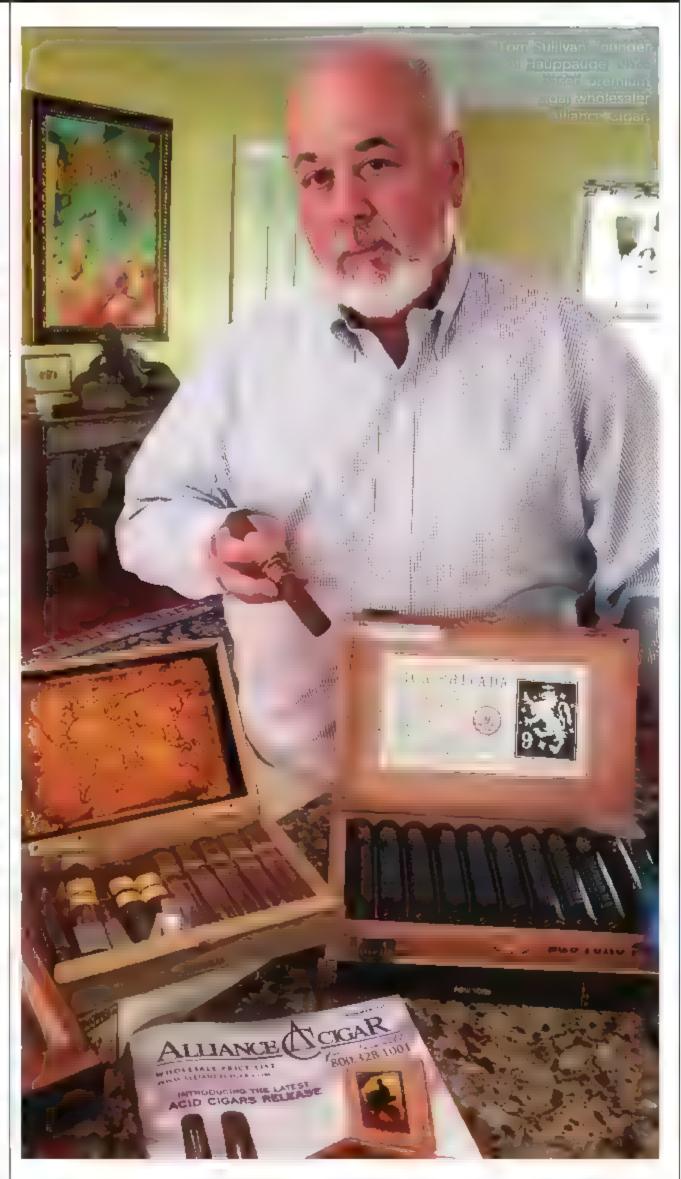
GAINING TRACTION THROUGH ACQUISITION

About 2005, Alliance Cigar moved to Long Island and purchased Humicon LLC, a humidor maker. The two companies were combined and Sullivan became chairman, while Humicon's founder-Steve Kallinikos, an engineer by training who holds numerous patents—has remained Tom's partner. In addition to supplying Alliance Cigar's robust business in wholesale humidors, Humicon also opened the door to the company's early growth in on-premise accounts, supplying golf courses, restaurants, and other businesses with premium cigars merchandised in turn-key humidor setups. These days, humidors are no longer a focus for Alliance Cigars, but it does work closely with Quality Importers to supply their customers with their displays and humidor needs.

Sullivan notes he's never been interested in expanding his wholesale distribution business into other products just because they could be profitable. There certainly has been no shortage of pitches over the years from manufacturers eager to open Alliance Cigar to their lines of pipes, pipe tobaccos, machine-made cigars, coffee—even the newest big-growth category, CBD. "We say all the time, it's not really our passion," offers Sullivan of the array of merchandise he's declined to carry over the years. "We might know how to sell it, and maybe our customers sell it themselves, but at the end of the day, I'll point out that our difference is our interest, our passion, and our knowledge of a very narrow product range.

"Some people try to be all things to all people, and that's all well and good," Sullivan notes, "but for my partner Steve and I, this is our interest, this is our passion. And we are blessed that it's also our families business."

Currently, Alliance Cigar has accounts in nearly 40 states, but has remained small family company that intimately understands the needs of small tobacco retailers, whether traditional brick and mortar tobacconists or cigarette outlets. The company has also developed cigar sales for customers in the beverage, spirits, golf, special events, hospitality



and resort industries, as well as tennis, boating, and golf clubs. Sullivan explains that Alliance has extended the reach of where premium cigars can be purchased and enjoyed, "other points of purchase"

or off-premise sites that have tobacco licenses and a humidor, but where cigars are not their number one-selling category.

Sullivan is proud that almost all Alliance employees are long-time staff bers, some from the very start of the company 20 years ago. "It's a big family," he says proudly. "Even employee's sons and daughters now work here. Part of the obligation of being in a family business, everyone always pitches in.

"We are equally proud of the long term relationships we have built with our suppliers. In particular we started working with Drew Estate shortly after they came into existence."

Jonathan Drew, founder and president of Drew Estate, added his own insight when announcing a joint project in 2017. "For hundreds of years, personal relationships have been a major component in the premium cigar trade," said Drew. "Tommy has played a significant role in Drew's craft and development, especially in regard to our distribution, trade marketing, and company-wide critical thinking. Our trusting relationship blossomed early, over 20 years ago, and then solidified...each time the drama hit Drew Estate, Tommy was there for us to work through the crisis with sage leadership, compassion, and resources. Tom carries the traits of a true leader."

TRAINING FOR THOROUGH MERCHANDISE KNOWLEDGE

Over the years, staff at Alliance Cigars has developed a deep knowledge of the products it distributes, and the company regularly welcomes suppliers to come in and educate the entire staff on the latest developments to their lines, such as extensions, special promotions, positioning, pricing, and such.

"It's an ongoing constant process, because with all the cigars today, there's so many great choices," says Sullivan. "There's so much great product and exciting enhancements to brands, particularly in the last five or six years, it seems."

"Every month we try to pick a couple of SKUs or a brand, or an extension of a brand, and try to stay current on what the product is and what positioning it's meant to have in the market, whether it's in the value chain, the price point, or if there's a promotion that's coming up that we're going to be running," says Sullivan. The education effort may be as simple as learning the details about a promotion, executing a point-of-sale

merchandising, program, or concentrating on a priority brand with a manufacturer's portfolio. "Those types of things are services that we provide, and education comes to us from the supplier often times," says Sullivan.

"We try to have everything in the category that we feel has marketability to our customers," says Sullivan of his offerings, which range from major manufacturers to small specialty companies and cover every price point. "That winds up being a very wide swath of anyone that's been making and producing cigars for the last five to seven years. We don't really wait until our customstand-up humidors and from 25 to 30 facings, then add additional units or upgrade to walk-in humidors as he helps them grow the category, they'll. Sometimes they are working with brand new shops, helping them outfit and supply product for their humidors.

"Several years later, we're helping them source humidification equipment and helping them get the right materials so that they can build a nice little walk-in humidor," Sullivan says.

Sullivan's business partner, Steve Kallinikos, is a licensed HVAC engineer who has helped many new business owners source and properly install and

> We try to have everything in the category that we feel has marketability to our customers. That winds up being a very wide swath of anyone that's been making and producing cigars for the last five to seven years.

ers ask for certain brands. We try to stay a little bit ahead of that curve, and we try to work with the smaller, newer entrants to the market, because sometimes having those unique products for our customers helps them, even though they may only have a hundred facings of cigars in their store.

"When someone walks in to buy a cigar and they see a range of products from small, unique boutique cigars up to the industry standards, their judgment of the retailer improves, in our opinion, and that the guy isn't just carrying the top-10 most-widely-distributed cigars, but the guy has a broad, balanced selection to his collection."

Sullivan says helping his retail customers achieve that balance is part of Alliance Cigar's job, but for retailers that are new to the category or looking to build it out, scale can be a challenge.

"It's hard," Sullivan admits. "The smaller their footages for cigars, it becomes more difficult. But the more that they begin to see turnover of the product, and the more they begin to see people coming back and asking for product, they begin to add additional humidors." Sullivan says he often sees his retail customers start out with

maintain the correct cooling and humidification equipment, plumbing, cigar storage and displays—everything involved in merchandising premium cigars.

"They can't just put all their eggs in the basket of heritage brands," he stresses. "They do need to balance it with some of the more unique products and brands that are in the market—some people would call them boutique or the micro brands—so that they have a really good balance to their investment in their cigar inventory."

ADDRESSING THE UNIQUE NEEDS OF BRICK & MORTAR RETAIL

For retail shops concerned about the challenges of competing with big catalogs and Internet operations, Sullivan offers a simple yet effective approach in developing a solid business. "Worry about the people that come in the front door and how you treat them," he says. "There's always things you can offer them, whether it's products or a service that's unique to your store. If you focus on that, you'll build loyalty, you'll build repeat business."

Typical of Sullivan's approach in helping shops manage and build their premium cigar category, he even created

a special limited-availability merchandise offering to help retailers build loyalty with their customers, particularly smaller accounts.

Their exclusive limited edition "DeSocio Series" of exclusive sizes of top-rated cigar brands also reflects Sullivan's personal appreciation of the tradition and craft of fine cigars, while fulfilling his desire to honor a family member.

First appearing in 2013 as a special 6 x 54 shape in the Alec Bradley Tempus line, DeSocio is named after Sullivan's maternal grandfather, and holds very special meaning to his mother, as she is the last descendant in her family to have had the DeSocio last name. Sullivan wanted to keep the name alive while memorializing his grandfather, a hard-working Italian immigrant who enjoyed cigars, which were one of his few luxuries.

"On a Sunday afternoon, he could sit down and read the newspaper, or relax and have a cigar," says Sullivan of the stories passed down in his family. "You start to think about how meaningful it is," he adds, marveling at the simple pleasure a cigar could bring someone who might work six, six-and-half days a week.

"I think sometimes people outside of the cigar industry lose sight of the fact that it's a simple pleasure," Sullivan continues. "It's a highly skilled craft, a handmade art form enjoyed occasionally—a celebratory or a special moment-type of an occasion, and that's really at the essence of premium cigars."

To date, Alliance Cigar has partnered with five of its key supply partners to create the ever-growing "DeSocio Series." There have been seven more releases since the original 2013 Alec Bradley Tempus DeSocio; Flor de las Antillas DeSocio (5 3/4 x 54) from My Father Cigars, Inc.; Oliva Serie V Melanio DeSocio (6 1/2 x 54 box press); Alec Bradley Prensado DeSocio (5-1/2 x 56); Aging Room Quattro F55 DeSocio (5-3/4 x 47); Laranja Reserva DeSocio (5-5/8 x 54 perfecto) from Espinosa Cigars; Herrera Estelí DeSocio (6 x 60) from Drew Estate; and the most recent addition in 2018—Rocky Patel Sun Grown Maduro DeSocio (5-3/4 x 46). While all of the releases are considered regular production, they are only distributed through Alliance



Above: Herrera Esteli DeSocio. In announcing the cigar in 2017, Drew Estate co-founder Jonathan Drew said a statement: "The Herrera Esteli 'DeSocio' is a special cigar and beautiful concept which honors family and heritage. Tommy is a tobacco man, who has helped many in the premium digar manufacturing community grow and better themselves. It's great to give something of value back to our Brother Sully."

Inset: Rocky Patel Sun Grown Maduro DeSocio, the newest release in the series.

Cigar in small quantities, retailing between \$8.50 and \$12 each.

Another Alliance Cigar exclusive is the Foyle brand, which Sullivan created along with Alec Bradley founders Alan Ruben and Ralph Montero, and Alec Bradley private label manager Dave Topper. "They helped us develop the blend and the packaging and ultimately they had it produced at Raices Cubana, back when Raices was a fairly new," Sullivan explains of the small factory in Danli, Honduras that has soared in notoriety in recent years.

"It took us a couple of years to come up with the blend that we were happy with," he adds, noting they liked the idea of creating a boutique product from a "small, really great" family-run factory. The medium-bodied cigars feature ■ rich blend Nicaraguan, Honduran, and Costa Rican tobaccos finished with
Criollo seed Colorado wrapper, Cuban-pressed, and undergo extensive cedar aging. Five shapes are offered, presented in 20-count natural boxes.

"It's gone well," says Sullivan, "and we added the Foyle l'Anniversario Maduro a couple of years back," a separate line for which Alliance Cigar partnered with General Cigar Company. "They had a blend and a wrapper that we had loved for some time," he explains. Sullivan says both manufacturing partners for Foyle have great controls over quality and consistency. "It's something that we're very proud of, that we're able to sell to our customers when they're looking for something unique and different that isn't sold on a very large-scale basis."

Retailers who succeed in getting such products into the hands of their customers establish can establish an ongoing relationship, says Sullivan. "When they enjoy it, they're going to return—in all probability, to their friendly shopkeeper to purchase it, because it's not something that they're going to find in every point of distribution in the cigar world."

"It continues to grow and it continues to become a more important component of our portfolio," Sullivan concludes.

Alliance Cigars, 400 Oser Ave #500, Hauppauge, N.Y. 11788, Toll-free: (800) 328-1001, Web: alliancecigar.com.



An Epic Return

Epic Cigars, founded by Dean Parsons in 2010, made surprisingly swift strides under Parson's dream to build an international cigar brand. Following its recent purchase by Zander-Greg, Epic is stronger than ever and ready for a bright future. > BY E. EDWARD HOYT III

Pic Cigars returned to the 2019 IP-CPR Trade Show under new ownership, having taken a break from last year's industry gathering in the midst of a company restructuring. Earlier this year, Pasadena-based Zander-Greg Distributors, owner of Nat Cicco Cigars, purchased Epic and formed • new partnership with Epic Cigars founder Dean Parsons, who now represents Zander-Greg's entire premium cigar division. Parsons, who continues as both the creative force behind Epic as well as its public face, is also educating consumers about Nat Cicco and Zan-

Dean Parsons, founder of Epic Cigars, continues as the creative force and public face of the brand under new ownership of Zander-Greg, Inc.



der-Greg's other premium cigar brands at a variety of cigar events in throughout North America and Europe. Zander-Greg owner and founder Arthur Berberian, along with his son Alex, showcased the Epic brand at Zander-Greg's IPCPR booth, where Parsons greeted a steady stream of familiar faces happy to once again see Epic brands on display.

Having enjoyed cigars since his early days in law enforcement, Parsons unwittingly began paving his entry into the cigar industry when he began traveling to the Dominican Republic in 2005 from Turks and Caicos Islands, an idyllic travel destination south east of the Bahamas where he worked in real estate. Fine cigars were non-existent in the islands, though, and as he deepened his appreciation and knowledge of the cigar making process visiting factories and farms, an opportunity came to light.

Working with master blender Rolando Villamil in Santiago, Parsons first marketed a Turks and Caicos-branded cigar—Turks Select—to the territory's resorts and hotels, but by 2009 the booming real estate market there had soured, and he had taken a new job in the Dominican Republic. Living in "cigar country" only deepened his fascination with the art of blending, and in 2010 he trademarked the Epic cigar brand for international sales, and founded his own company, Epic Cigars LLC.

Parsons patiently spent several years developing his initial blends with Villamil, culminating with the release in early 2014 of his debut line, the spicy Epic Corojo, followed nearly simultaneously by the rich Epic Maduro Reserva. Both releases are medium-full in strength and body and feature blend of Dominican and Nicaraguan fillers. The Corojo sports a Dominican binder and Ecuadorian Corojo wrapper, while the Maduro has a Cameroon binder and an Ariparaca wrapper from Brazil. Only months later, Epic Cigars exhibited at its first IPCPR Trade Show, in July 2014, rolling out its third line, the me-

WARNING: This product contains nicotine. Nicotine is an addictive chemical.





dium-bodied Epic Habano, which pairs the natural sweetness of Ecuador Habano wrapper with a spicy-sweet Cameroon binder to round out the new company's quickly expanding lineup with an important consumer taste preference.

Considering the company's youth, Parsons felt extremely fortunate in 2015 to secure Canadian distribution through Joe Bondi's Alec Bradley Canada, as well as distribution in Germany and other key surrounding markets through Zigarrenfabrik Kleinlagel. The deals quickly opened up access to new markets, the first step in fulfilling his vision of building an international brand.

In 2016, Epic released La Rubia— Spanish for blonde—a line featuring a silky Ecuadorian Connecticut wrapper, a Mexican San Andrés binder, and a Dominican and Nicaraguan filler blend. Also released that year were two limited editions: Maduro Fuerte, a stronger version of the Epic Maduro Reserva, as well as Epic San Andrés with a Mexican San Andrés wrapper and Indonesian binder. Both releases were limited to only 250 boxes in a single size.

Finally, Epic released another limited edition cigar, Project E San Andrés in 2017, featuring a Mexican San Andrés wrapper with a "smokable band" (the stylized "E" from the Epic logo cut out in a contrasting leaf), along with an Indonesian Sumatra binder and

Dominican and Nicaraguan filler blend, presented in a single size. Par-



Above: The innovative limited edition Project E San Andres features a Mexican San Andres wrapper with a natural leaf tobacco band emblazoned with the Epic "E."

sons says the cigar will become a regular production release going forward, joining a number of new shapes he's added to his core lines over the company's relatively short history.

Change has been a constant theme in Parsons' career, so his new partnership with Zander-Greg is hardly unusual, allowing him to focus on the areas he loves the most-blending and brand building-while taping the strong sales and distribution infrastructure of the brand's new owner. Epic fans need not worry about their beloved blends: Parsons assures that all of the existing core lines from Epic Cigars remain the same. There are some additions nearly ready for release, however, including new Epic Nicaragua blends and also some new blends from the Dominican Republic, all launching by the end of the year.

Parsons met Berberian five years ago in the Dominican Republic and in recent years the benefits of an acquisition became clear: Zander-Greg, which Berberian founded in 1995, has been expanding its own portfolio beyond its traditional range of value-priced cigars and into the premium cigar category. With the acquisition of Epic Cigars, and partnering with Parsons to head up the growing portfolio of brands in its premium cigar division, Zander-Greg takes a significant leap in making inroads into this market segment, both domestically and abroad. Parsons meanwhile has secured a well-established partner with sophisticated distribution, marketing, inventory, and sales capabilities, not only stabilizing the Epic brand but paving the way for future growth and line expansions.

Long known for its value brands, Zander-Greg built its entry into the premium segment by rolling out ■ new direction for its venerable Nat Cicco brand, which dates to 1965. Zander-Greg planned well in advance for the brand's 50th anniversary in 2015, releasing the Nat Cicco Aniversario Liga #4 in 2012. The Nicaraguan-dominant blend with Nicaraguan fillers and binder, paired with an Ecuadorian Habano wrapper, are finished with a pig-tail cap and closed foot. They are offered in five sizes retailing from \$13 to \$15 each and presented in 20-count varnished cedar boxes.

Also added in 2012 was the super-premium positioned Nat Cicco HHB, a full-bodied Nicaraguan blend offered with either Ecuadorian Connecticut wrapper (HHB Classic) or Habano wrapper (HHB Gold). Both versions are finished with a pig-tail cap and closed foot, offered in three sizes retailing from \$13 to \$15 each in 10-count black lacquer boxes.

The latest release, Nat Cicco Elephant Ears, is a medium-to-full Nicaraguan puro featuring a shaggy foot in three sizes retailing from \$11 to \$12.50 each, presented in 20-count rustic, unfinished cedar boxes.

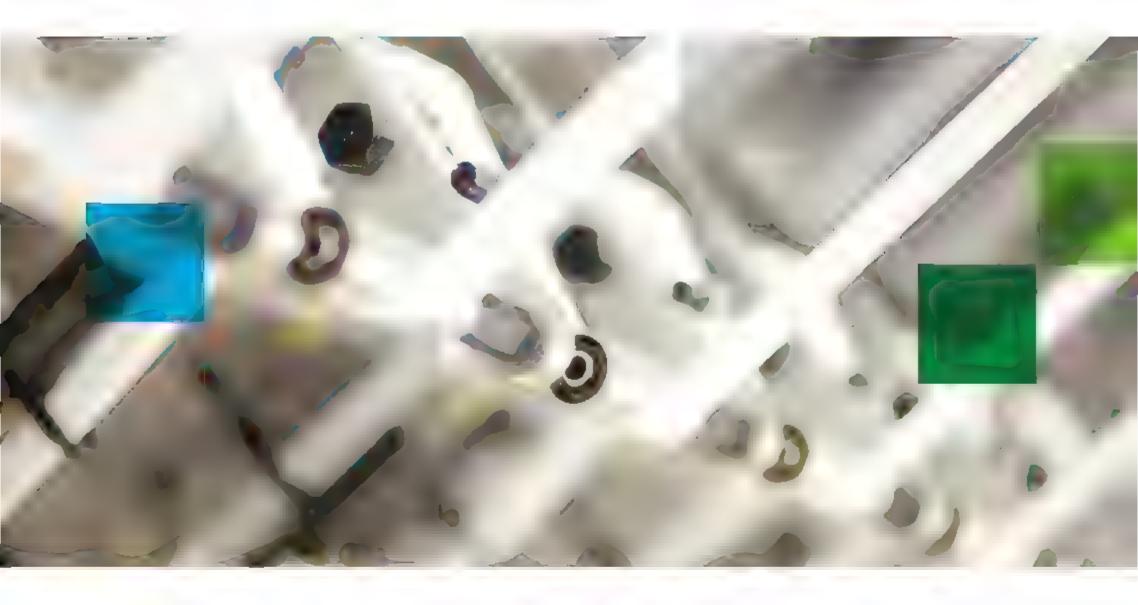
Berberian's son Alex has joined Parsons at number of larger events, including Nat Cicco and Epic's debut at the recent Rocky Mountain Cigar Expo. "We're excited about the support of Zander-Greg distribution," says Parsons, noting the acquisition is helping Epic "elevate its game" including attending larger consumer events, building on all of Parsons' hard work to date.

Zander-Greg, Inc., 2830 East Foothill Blvd., Pasadena, CA 91107, Toll-free: Tel: (888) 662-5111, Fax: (626) 791-2763, Email: wholesale@zander-greg.com, Web: zander-greg.com.



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- Iving Size Regular
- Rolls



2019 IPCPR Trade Show

Goodbye IPCPR, Hello PCA

The industry's premium tobacco association rolled out a major rebranding and slate of new initiatives positioned as either critical for the industry's survival or increasing membership value. Some were embraced cheerfully, others seemed to overwhelm, and at least one spawned a mini civil war among members. >E. EDWARD HOYT III

The premium tobacco industry met in Las Vegas earlier than usual this year, June 28-July 2 at the Sands Expo Center, for the final IP-CPR Trade Show. Wait, it's not what you think. The show returns in 2020, but under the banner of the trade association's new name: the Premium Cigar Association (PCA), which was unveiled Friday afternoon, June 28, at a heavily teased "major announcement from the IPCPR" following the last educational seminar of the day and giving the industry plenty to ponder at General Cigar Company's opening night Cohiba party that evening.

The cat was already out of the bag, though, thanks to some online reporting a week earlier, rendering the association's reveal "the worst kept secret in the industry," joked PCA executive director Scott Pearce.

"The new universe demands that as an organization we start going forward with a forward-thinking approach that doesn't solve the problems today, or solve the problems of yesterday, but really provides us an absolute platform in order to solve the problems going into the future. Because unless we start doing that, we're not going to be able to plan out a trajectory of growth, and sustainable grow for the industry, for the next 10, 15, 20 years. We're always going to be reactive." Pearce says the association asked itself how it could provide more value for the association's member, both retailers and manufacturers.

"The re-brand, it's not just about a name, it's not just about colors or a logo," Pearce continued "It's really ultimately what we do for you and how we add value to you and your daily lives, helping



The Premium Cigar Association's logo features tobacco leaf in shades of three colors, each representing facet of the industry; dark green for the tobacco fields and harvested leaf; dark brown the cured tobacco; and gray the ash, "evidence of tobacco well enjoyed," The three segments on each side of the leaf signify "3 and 3," or 1933—the year the association was founded.

you to do your business better, make more money, decrease costs, more profits."

Those on the front lines of legislative battles have found the previous rebranding, from the Retail Tobacco Dealers of America (RTDA) to the International Premium Cigar & Pipe Retailers Association (IPCPR) in 2007, had a problematic flaw from day one: invoking cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) in its name—in addition to just being a mouthful to say. The goal at the time was to drop the negative connotation of "dealers" and to distance itself from cigarettes and machine-made cigars. But the awkward acronym-within-an-acronym has proven to be an ongoing distraction of its own, even a stumbling block, in building a strong voice representing the industry on Capitol Hill.

In explaining the new PCA name, Pearce said a significant amount of research was conducted with all stakeholders. He noted the challenge for any trade group in getting their message across during the brief meetings they have with staff in congressional offices, and the frustration of wasting an opportunity to make an impactful impression derailed from the onset by the need to explain who the group is and what it does. Or worse, what it's not involved in—such as CPR.

While steeped in history, the traditional "cigar store Indian" that has been the de facto symbol of tobacco retailing and served as the association's logo since its inception, was likewise retired, relic of a bygone era that left as awkward and unnecessary magnet of negative attention surrounding an already polarizing industry.

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Branded as the Premium Cigar Association, the trade group adopts a more succinct and focused persona without any of the previous baggage-a strong base upon which staff can lobby and defend the industry's interests. Officials were quick to assure that the association is as committed as ever in representing the premium pipe and pipe tobacco segments of the industry, despite its removal from the association's name.

"This is ultimately about how we modernize, how we evolve and adapt," Pearce stressed, "to not only protect, but to grow the premium cigar and pipe tobacco industry through innovation, education, advocacy, market research, and the facilitation of business relationships."

TIME FOR PROACTIVE MEASURES, NOT JUST INDUSTRY DEFENSE

While defense may win championships, Pearce said, the association has practically focused on nothing but defensive the past few years. "We're never going to win until we go on the offensive and start scoring some points," he stressed, noting the industry will continue to loose ground if it doesn't become proactive.

So what does a proactive advocacy fight look like? Increasingly, it's attacking issues long before they reach the federal level, a departure from the association's approach years ago when it lacked the resources and budgets to be active in issues nationwide.

"We're covering every state," Pearce reported. "We've been building this model for several years, and we're practically there. Everything happens and percolates from the states. There are over 40,000 municipalities in this country with laws, other regulations, taxes that are flying at your stores on a consistent basis. We do not have the funds to fight that, but we can to it in a smart way.

"We want our stories and our advocacy to reverberate and echo in the halls of every state capitol: Your stories of small business, what you do for your communities, how you give back to the communities, and the jobs [you provide] and the taxes you pay is all critical, and it's all stories that actually move the needle."

PCA already spends a great deal of time building up and strengthening relationships on Capitol Hill, so that when the need arises to get something done, the association alreay know who to ask, Pearce said.

In August, the association will launch the PCA Foundation for Research and Education, which Pearce explained is a way for it to continuously produce more data that helps it with its message.

In September, PCA has planned its first Black Congressional Caucus event at its Washington, D.C. townhouse, an opportunity for the legislators who work in those offices to "understand who we are and what we in need in order for them to continue to help us," Pearce explained.

"It's relationships we've had before, and some of them are new relationships that are going to get better.

On November 1t, the association will be hosting a Casino Night PAC Fundraiser, the first of many efforts to widen the source of funding for its political action committee beyond just PCA membership. "We cannot continue to put the burden solely upon you," said Pearce. "We are going to continue to do things like this Casino Night PAC Fundraiser. We're going to enable more PAC giving throughout the year because it's no secret-you need money in order to play in politics, and we need to be able to get influence and the PAC is one of the best ways to do it."

PCA-PAC also plans to put together "legislative platforms," Pearce announced, focusing not only on premium cigar legislative exemption as it has in the past (and which continues to be a strong message for PCA) but also other "legislative asks" that PCA-PAC can pursue to help membership's businesses, including tax-related, payment processing-related, or HR issues-related asks, for example. "Which means we are also aligning with other industries to increase our stature and expand our credibility on Capitol Hill."

"The more we are aligned on these issues, the better we get at being able to be tied into the folks we need to get to in order for us to move our agenda forward," Pearce added.



Scott Pearce, PCA executive director.



Ken Neumann, PCA past president



John Anderson, PCA president.







CigarCon was discussed at several different occasions during the show, eliciting some strong concerns and a fair amount of skepticism. Several associate members, including Christian Eirora, owner C.L.E. Cigars, explained their support for the concept and urged members to embrace the vision. A Lunchtime Learning Session was rescheduled as a Q&A by Scott Pearce, where retailers including Gary Kolesaire, The Tobacco Shop of Ridgewood, N.J. and Jeff Borysiewicz, Corona Cigar Company, Florida, voiced their reservations and asked pointed questions.

PCA: A FULL-SERVICE ORGANIZATION

Education is considered a key component in PCA's services to membership, and the association continues to expand and evolve its educational offerings at the annual trade show. But Pearce said the association needs to be doing that 365 days a year.

"On that note in October we are launching a pilot program which is going to be an in-person workshop at our townhouse," said Pearce. "It's a road show, we're going to and continue that in February 2020 in Dallas, and in April 2020 we're going to launch our online voting platform. This is a way that all of you as retailers will be able to have you, as well as your customers, and even manufacturers, to have training programs all built out customized for you, where you can track employee progress through any one of these programs." The topics will range

from inventory control to finance management to customer sales and service, up to FDA compliance and age verification/ carding practices.

Debuting at the annual meeting keynote breakfast was the association's new high-production value print publication, PCA: The Magazine. "We want to be the Harvard Business Review for cigar retailers and manufacturers," Pearce stated. "It's a way for us to get best practices and examples from other industries into the hands of retailers on a bi-monthly basis."

The debut July/August 2019 issue clocked in at 92 pages, 20 of which were paid advertisements. It featured a mix of stories about PCA—the rebranding, upcoming initiatives, a complete listing of trade show exhibitors—profiles of retail members and associate manufacturers, business advice stories, and bylined stories by industry players.

NEW WEBSITE LAUNCHING IN FALL

While the association's current website at ipcpr.org remained operational at press time (although featuring only minimal updates), all efforts appear to be directed to preparation of an all-new website that will launch this fall at the association's new domain, premiumcigars.org.

Among the new tools and resources will be a Business Solutions Center which comes with a buyer's guide, listing all PCA associate member companies. Pearce led an entire educational seminar dedicated to previewing this website feature. Manufacturers will be able to instantaneously update sales rep and product information, allowing retailers to have instant access to current information.

The association will also be producing white papers of best practices and standards; creating a repository of all of the divergent licensing information from each of the 50 states; debuting a Learning Management System portal that will allow retailers to customize how they learn and create educational programs; an expanded online version of PCA: The Magazine, offering a platform for different resources than those that appear in the print magazine, offering additional educational information; and a blog will allow membership to share their own insights and expertise with the larger cigar manufacturing community.

Earlier this year, the association rolled out a user-customizable weekly email news brief, powered by an artificial intelligence-power software service called InLoop, a news aggregator that curates industry-related stories from wide range of tobacco and retailing trade publications.

PCA AND CONSUMERS? CIGARCON 2020 IS UNVEILED, THEN CANCELED

"The cigar community is powerful, but we are small. We need to enlist our massive army of consumers in our fight, as well as in the organization itself," stated Pearce in transitioning to the hot button topic that had the industry abuzz days before the trade show.

No other announcement unveiled by the trade organization even remotely approached the polarization generated by the decision (or was it actually just a proposal?) to open one day of next year's

trade show to consumers. Even the name had already been registered and trademarked: CigarCon, presented as the largest consumer cigar event in the industry.

A slick video introducing CigarCon generated only ■ smattering of polite applause among a visibly skeptical crowd.

"CigarCon allows us to activate the consumer base and connect it to the industry in a way that does not exist anywhere else," Pearce proposed, speaking in broad generalities. "It's going to catalyze growth for the industry and it's going to provide a platform for a massive opportunity for telling our story. It binds the industry together and promotes this industry through the correct prism. And what I mean is, everyone loves to lump us in with other categories. The reality is this industry is unique, it is special. And that is the message we're trying to get out on that, and we're doing it the best we can. This event gives us the largest platform to do that."

Pearce said the event would allow PCA to grow the consumer base "by bringing in parallel luxury industries within this event, it allows us-for people who like bourbon, for people who like Harley-Davidson who may not necessarily be cigar smokers, to be able to come to this event and get in on the action." All proceeds generated by Cigar-Con would go to PCA's regulatory fight.

By late August, however, PCA had released a statement announcing a "date



Keynote speaker Ken Schmidt, former director of communications, Harley-Davidson

IPCPR 2019 Best in Show Exhibitor Awards

Most Innovative **DREW ESTATE**

Finest in Industry **ALTADIS U.S.A.**



Best Small Exhibitor (1 booths) **BARRINGTON HOUSE** PREMIUM CIGARS LTD.

Best Small Exhibitor (2 booths) **ANTIGUA ESTELÍ**

Best Medium Exhibitor (3-5 booths) CRUX CIGAR CO.

Best Medium Exhibitor (6-10 booths) **DUNBARTON TOBACCO & TRUST**

change," that CigarCon would not take place in 2020 after all and would be "considered" for 2021.

PCA also announced II had created a sub-committee to focus exclusively on CigarCon and expects participation from all classes of retailer and associate membership. "Our goal in announcing Cigar-Con at our 2019 trade show was to elicit feedback and have the conversations surrounding a consumer event," said PCA president John Anderson. "We have been in active listening mode and have taken in all of the industry feedback and have really adjusted many of the logistics surrounding the event. With all of that in mind, and in consultation with our manufacturing partners, we ultimately came to the conclusion that setting the goal for 2021 was the optimal time frame."

Pearce added that the PCA is seeking greater input across its membership. "We are embarking on a significant change to our committee structure to encourage more participation from our membership," said Pearce in a statement. "By expanding committee participation to a number of non-board members, we can ensure we are consistently delivering more value for our members."

Scott Regina, chair of the PCA Trade Show Committee, noted the progress the PCA is making on creating a better experience for the show and convention itself. "While CigarCon is ■ part of our plans, we are hard at work on creating more

Best Large Exhibitor (11-15 booths) NAT SHERMAN INTERNATIONAL

Best Large Exhibitor (16-19 booths) C.L.E. CIGARS

Best Large Exhibitor (20+ booths) OLIVA CIGAR COMPANY

Best Accessory Exhibitor QUALITY IMPORTERS TRADING CO., INC.

Best Specialty Pipe Display LAUDISI DISTRIBUTION GROUP

Best New Exhibitor A.C.E. PRIME MANUFACTURING

new and exciting programs to enhance our annual convention and trade show. Adding new voices and fresh perspectives is going to be a welcome new component as we forge ahead," Regina said.

Retail and associate members who would like to be considered for service on the committee can contact PCA executive director Scott Pearce at scott@premiumcigars.org.

ANNUAL MEETING, BOARD CHANGES

Ken P. Neumann, Neumann's Cigars & More, Libertyville, Ill., finished his term as president of the PCA board of directors, while John Anderson, W. Curtis Draper, Tobacconist, Washington, D.C. advanced on the board to become PCA's new president. Other board member succession advancements included Greg Zimmerman, The Tobacco Company, Lemoyne, Pa. to vice president; and Scott Regina, Emerson's Cigars, Virginia Beach, Va. to treasurer. Todd Naifeh, ZT Cigars, Oklahoma City, Ok., formerly an IPCPR director, joined the board of directors as secretary.

Voted into position as new directors were Mame Kendall, Smoke Cigar Shop & Lounge, Bridgeville, Pa.; Jessica Hutson, Just for Him, Springfield, Mo.; and Steve Castro, Davidus Cigars, Frederick, Md. Board members whose terms expired included Terry Galagher, Smoker Friendly, Boulder, Co.; and George Koebel, Havana Connections, Richmond, Va. S







2019 Tobacco Plus Expo (TPE 2019)

Big Growth for Tobacco, Vape, Altertative Show

Keynote speaker Michael Herklots of Nat Sherman, led off a series of eductational seminars by sharing his experience on merchandising, marketing, and store promotion. > E. EDWARD HOYT III

ith attendance up almost 50 percent over last year's numbers, TPE 2019 (Tobacco Plus Expo) gave the tobacco industry an exceptional start to the new year. All facets of the business came together for the trade show at the Las Vegas Convention Center, which ran in a new, three-day format from February 11-13, 2019. TPE has enjoyed tremendous growth since coming under the arm of the Tobacco Media Group (TMG) in 2016, both owned by Kretek International. This year's show featured more brands, floor space, parties, education, entertainment, and products than ever before, offering everyone in the convention center a well-rounded

look at the industry, and an opportunity to start the year off on a path to profit.

TPE organizers say the expo is the largest B2B tobacco trade show highlighting the full-spectrum of tobacco, vapor, alternatives, and general merchandise products available on the ever-evolving market.

"The TPE show has been a fantastic experience for us," said Selim Hanono of E.P. Carrillo Cigar Co. "The time and money spent by TMG to grow the premium cigar segment at TPE has definitely paid off. I've seen a lot of the country's top retailers here throughout the show, and we've written a lot of orders from both existing accounts and new accounts.



It's been an amazing experience."

Although one of the many benefits of TPE is to see the breadth of products selfing in all areas of the tobacco and alternative industries, great lengths were taken to offer a quality experience for the premium cigar market. The event featured top manufacturers and retailers in the category, interesting and useful seminars from seasoned veterans, and even the entertainment of the Drew Estate Barn Smoker, which celebrates tobacco leaf. In addition, the strategic timing of TPE 2019 at the start of the new year is ideal for the cigar industry, enabling retailers to maximize their profits as they bring in inventory for the spring smoking season, while enjoying special trade show pricing.

Says retailer Rick Baker of Tobacco Grove, "We go to the TAA [Tobacconists] Association of Americal and the IPCPR International Premium Cigar & Pipe Retailers Association] shows every year, and this was our first time at TPE. We sell only premium cigars, and I was really pleased at the number of premium cigar manufacturers who were at the show this year. We're definitely coming back, because the timing of the show is great for us. It's the slow time of year for our business, and having a show in late January or early February gives us an opportunity to stock our shelves in preparation for the beginning of the selling season."

About 4600 people attended TPE 2019 in all, visiting (or working at) 300 booths throughout the show floor. Exhibitors staked out larger spaces this year, enabling a larger showing of products for buyers to browse. Networking opportunities were in full force, with educational panels hosted by industry experts and NATO representatives, parties, booth events, and an awards show hosted by Tobacco Business, magazine which recognized industry standouts from the past year, along with the cigar maker Emesto Perez Carrillo, founder of E.P. Carrillo Cigar Co.

"This is our first year at the TPE show, but I can tell you that it won't be our last," said Drew Newman of J.C. Newman Cigar Company. "It's been a great experience for us, and we've been non-stop busy. I think I've only had about five minutes of downtime each day of the show so far."

Dawn Conger, TPE sales manager who joined the organization in October 2018, said, "With this year's growth and the incredible feedback that we are receiving about TPE 2019, we definitely feel that we've accomplished all we had hoped for this year's show.

"We're pleased that the industry seems to have taken note about what we're trying to do here at TPE, and are willing to give it their all, too. We're bringing together the best of the best for a good, fun, profitable show that sets everyone up for a successful year." Conger says those efforts will continue with equal zeal for the 2020 show in an effort to raise the bar even further.

Michael Herklots, vice president of retail and brand development at Nat Sherman International, delivered this year's keynote speech, drawing on his years of high end retail cigar experience in deftly addressing "How to Market, Merchandise and Promote in a New FDA Landscape." Herklots stressed the need to clearly define a store's branding, focusing on a consistent approach to meeting the needs and connecting with its particular customer base, whether its high end or mainstream. And above all, embrace change: it's the only true constant.



Planning for TPE 2020, scheduled for January 29-31, 2020 at the Las Vegas Convention Center, is already well underway. Only a few months after the 2019 show, wrapped up, 50 percent of the 2020 show floor was already booked. For companies that are planning planning to exhibit, TMG recommends reserving space as early as possible to secure the best location.

"Every year it's crazy to see the level

of growth at TPE and Tobacco Business," says Sam Morales from Cheddar Alchemy. "If you were on the fence about attending the show, you should seriously stop messing around. The show floor is a way more personal venue for attendees, and the date of the show for the category is fantastic for retailers."

To learn more about attending or exhibiting at the 2020 TPE show, visit tobaccoplusexpo.com.



Kretek International / Philips & King International neid a giveaway for a Harley Davidson Sportster Iron 883 Motorcycle. Entry in the contest was for qualifying customers of companies.

TPE 2019 LAS VEGAS MERCHANDISE ROUNDUP

> Drew Estate, Miami, Fla. (drewestate.com), is celebrating the 20th anniversary of its signature Acid infused cigars with a number of regular production releases. The recently launched ACID Croqueta Tubo marks the return of the original full ring gauge, short length expression in the Acid Purple



line. Two long filler "nub smokes" measuring 2 1/2" x 50 are contained in each resealable tube, in a "one for now, one for later" format. The cigars are rolled from robust blend of Nicaraguan filler and binder and finished with an earthy San Andres maduro wrapper. "The Croqueta in a perfect sensorial experience of ACID when you want a complete cigar experience but are short on time," explained the company in a statement. Each ACID Croqueta Tubo has a suggested retail price of \$8.40 and ships in bundles of 25...



The company also extended "the power of deep purple" with the launch of **ACID Plush**, a new 5 1/2 x 50 size of this premium ACID blend. "At once rich, dense and wonderfully aromatic," Plush features "lush" Nicaraguan binder and filler and a "shimmering" Broadleaf maduro wrapper. Plush is sold in a 24-count box with an MSRP of \$230.40.

"The Purple line has been the quiet second champion in the ACID collection," said Jonathan Drew, founder and president of Drew Estate, "but to so many a crowd favorite due to its unique sizes and award-winning blends. In addition to the new Croqueta and Plush sizes, the "hearty" ACID Purple lineup includes Extra Ordinary Larry (6 x 60), Roam (7 x 48), C-notes (3 3/4 x 20), and Krush Morado (4 • 32).

Making its first industry appearance at the show were a new series of quick smokes, small cigars called Frenchies measuring 3 1/4" • 20 and debuting in the ACID and Tabak Especial lines. ACID Frenchies are small cigars wrapped in a lush Sumatran wrapper with Nicaraguan fillers, producing a delightful, sweet smoke with a pleasing room note. Tabak Especial Frenchies are wrapped in



Shade with Nicaraguan fillers that are perfect to pair with a morning cup of coffee. ACID Frenchies are packaged in both 5-count (\$5.99 MSRP each) and 10-count (\$9.99 MSRP each) packs, while the Tabak Especial Frenchies are sold in 10-count packs only (also \$9.99 each). Each of the three varieties are shipped in a shelf merchandising sleeve of 10 packs for retailer convenience, with each pack individually humidified with

Boveda for placement both inside the humidor or at the register.

"Frenchies are the mega start to kick off the 20th Anniversary of ACID, and ■ perfect way to enjoy ACID in any moment during your day," said Drew. For you coffee freaks, we also have the Tabak Especial in this new mini size." Frenchies are slated to begin shipping in June, following a "first to market" 60-day period exclusive to Kwik Trip's 650 retail locations, which began March 1st. A full introduction of these small cigars will take place at the 2019 IPCPR for all customers and sales channels.



The Herrera Estelí Habano Edicion Limitada Lancero has been re-released, exclusively for sale through Drew Diplomat retailers. Originally released in 2014, the Herrera Esteli Habano Edicion Limitada Lancero features a complex blend of Nicaraguan fillers, Honduran binder, and a spicy Ecuadorian Habano wrapper. Due to the skill required to roll the challenging 7 × 38 lancero vitola, there are only four pairs of rollers at Drew Estate's La Gran Fabrica that are allowed to produce this cigar. Adds Drew Estate master blender Willy Herrera, "The lancero is a notoriously difficult vitola to master both from a blending and rolling perspective. The same rollers who make the L40 are assigned to this special blend since they're the best of the best. We took our time here at the factory when we decided to re-release this cigar so that every aspect from flavor to construction is perfection." The lancero is available in 15 count boxes with an MSRP of \$186.96.

Also exclusive to Drew Diplomat Retailers is the **Herrera Esteli Miami**, which is handmade at the El Titan de Bronze factory on Calle Ocho in Little Havana, Miami. Crafted by Level 9 Cuban rollers, the line is expertly rolled with fillers from the Dominican Republic and Nicaragua; a rich Ecuadorian Sumatran binder; and an Ecuadorian Habano Oscuro wrapper. The new look of Herrera Esteli Miami features black and gold graphics, and they are available in five vitolas presented in boxes of 10 cigars: Robusto Grande (5 × 50), \$109.97 retail; Toro Especial (6 × 52), \$117.47; Lonsdale Deluxe (6 1/2 × 44), \$112.97; Piramide Fino (6 1/2 × 54), \$127.47; and Short Corona Gorda (5 3/4 x 48), \$97.97. Added Master Blender Willy Herrera, "Getting to spend so much time in my family's factory, El Titan de Bronze, I was able to personally supervise every step of the process to make sure the Miami's are smoking excellently."

 Legal Lean, Orlando, Fla. (legalleanstore.com), is offering retailers a potential solution to flavored tobacco product bans with the introduction of Legal Lean Grape Flavor Natural Cone Leaf Wraps, pre-rolled cone leaves which contain no tobacco. These all-natural organic products are made from natural bidi leaves designed to burn slowly and feature an all-natural corn husk "crutch," or filter that helps cool the smoke. Legal Lean c.e.o. Nick Anderson says, "the absence of tobacco potentially places the new Legal Lean Cones outside of flavored tobacco restriction bans in most jurisdictions." Anderson stresses that the biggest selling point for consumers, though is the "great Legal Lean Grape taste" that complement almost any herb combination. Each tube package contains three

cones: consumers remove the shape-preserving paper tube from each cone before filling and packing with the



dry herbal product of their choice, utilizing the provided packing stick. Countertop displays contain 24 tubes (72 total cones), and are packed 12 displays per case.

Micallef Cigars, Weatherford, Texas (micaltefcigars.com), announced six new vitolas that the company has added to three of its existing premium cigar lines.

Migdalia Toro (6 x 52), with a suggested retail price of \$10 each, is presented in 24-count boxes. The line utilizes Nicaraguan and Dominican fillers, a Sumatran binder, and a four-year-aged San Andrés Habano wrapper, delivering a full-flavored experience.

Connecticut Toro (6 × 52), \$10 each and Connecticut Gordo (6 × 60), \$12.50 each, are packaged in 25-count boxes. The Connecticut line taps Nicaraguan and Dominican fillers, a Nicaraguan Habano binder, and an Ecuadorian Connecticut wrapper, all aged for four years. It is a medium-strength blend with notes of cedar and nutmeg.

Finally, three new vitolas have joined the Experiencia La Crema series (which was previously offered solely in a 7 ≈ 52 Churchill format): Robusto (5) x 54), \$11 each; Toro (6 × 52), \$11.50 each; and Gordo (6×60) \$13, packaged in 20-count boxes. Medium in strength and very aromatic, La Crema is rolled with a four-year-aged Nicaraguan, Dominican, and Panamanian filler blend; an Ecuadorian Habano binder; and San Andrés Sumatra wrapper.

 KT&G USA, Plano, Texas, (ktngusa. com) continues to build awareness for its most recent addition, This, which is one of its most famous brands from South Korea that the company introduced into the U.S. market in 2018. Made with high quality burley leaf for ■ smooth taste, This "represents the American standard for taste and quality." Currently approved for sale in 44 U.S. states, it in offered in Red, Blue, Silver, and Menthol varieties in both 100s and Kings boxes. "This"





joins KT&G's other two U.S. offerings: Timeless Time and Carnival, Timeless Time is one of the best-selling 4th tier brands in the U.S. Introduced in 2010, it features premium tobacco leaf for a rich flavor at reasonable price. Carnival in KT&G's most established U.S. brand, offering its American blend with fine flue-cured and burley leaf for over 20 years.

extensive testing, the company seeks to ensure that every flavor is not only blended to perfection, but will also stand the test of time, never tiring the tongue. The company's brands include Cosmic Fog, The Lost Fog Collection, Platinum Collection, Liquid State Vapors, and **Next Day Vapor Products.**



Pyxus International, Morrisville, N.C. (pyxusintl.com), showcased Korent, its "expertly-crafted and responsibly-produced" consumer cannabidiol (CBD) products, offering a "natural path to improved well-being" (korenthemp.com). Korent CBD E-Liquids with 0% THC are 50/50 USP-Grade VG/PG blends offered Watermelon, Mango Pineapple, and Fresh Mint varieties in either 100mg or 600mg per ml strengths in either 100ml (\$24.99 retail) or 600ml (\$89.99 retail) bottles. Also offered is Booster, a natural, unflavored CBD product that can be used straight or combined with other e-liquids without affecting taste, available in either 100mg strength in 10ml bottle (\$24.99) or 300mg strength in 30ml bottle (\$49.99). Korent CBD Oil Drops with .3% THC are available in 150, 450, and 600mg strengths in Vanilla Mint or Grape flavors.



Moving in to CBD

North Carolina Distribution (NCD), a sister company of Dean Rouse's M&R Holdings, has launched its debut line of top-quality full spectrum CBD products in a unique, high-tech partnership with Carolina Hemp Products. > BY E. EDWARD HOYT III

hile the CBD market has recently exploded, seventh generation tobacco farmer Dean Rouse, owner North Carolina Distribution (NCD), is confident that his company's recently-launched offering, Crystal Coast Infusion full-spectrum CBD oil, has a significant advantage over the quickly crowding market segment.

"We started looking into this about four years ago," says Rouse, who is also owner of NCD's sister company, M&R Holdings-a fixture among tobacco retailers for decades. "My friend and mentor, Dwight Howard, approached me and said, 'We've got all the resources and everything to do this, and we feel we can make a better product than anyone on the market based on our farming expertise."

Rouse and Howard decided to collaborate in a joint venture to develop line of top-grade CBD products. Howard's company, Carolina Hemp Products of Kinston, N.C., handles all of the farming and production, while NCDwhich has been in business since 2001, now focuses its expertise exclusively on distribution and marketing. Originally

established to sell tobacco products solely in North Carolina, NCD now serves exclusively as the nationwide distributor of Crystal Coast Infusion CBD products, while M&R Holdings handles tobacco products, "to keep everything separate and accountable," explains Rouse.

The new venture, which builds upon 40 years of personal friendship between the business partners, encompasses a common goal and shared values in reaching it.

"We've been friends ■ long, long time, and we both wanted to do something positive," Rouse explains of the joint partnership. "Our primary goal here is to help people, and that is our primary purpose. We believe that the hemp products, and specifically the CBD oils and associated products, are going to give people a better life. That is our ultimate goal,"

Just as Rouse's tobacco farming ancestry dates back to 1732, Howard's family has an extensive background in farming, and the new venture is adhering to impeccable standards.

Utilizing former tobacco greenhouses updated with the latest technology for hemp production, Carolina Hemp Products has even had special blends of potting soil developed to give its hybrid plant the necessary strong start they need to thrive.

"Everything we're doing is truly organic. Everything," says Rouse proudly. "There is no chemical residue, so it's a 100% true organic product with no pesticides. We're in complete control of the products: from soil to oil, we call it."

Plant clones are produced from cuttings, allowing for the production of large quantities of offspring from a mother plant, nourished with watering systems that distribute organic-based nutrients. A combination of artificial



Tobacco farmer Dean Rouse, owner, North Carolina Distribution and M&R Holdings, Inc.

THIS IS MANUAL COUNTRY

SURGEON GENERAL'S WARNING:
Smoking Causes Lung Cancer,
Heart Disease, Emphysema, And
May Complicate Pregnancy.









and natural lighting is utilized to bring the plants to maturity, while harvested plants are hung and dried whole, closely monitored to prevent spoilage prior to processing into finished products.

"When we provide a consumer our products, we know exactly what that consumer is enjoying," Rouse explains.

Keeping in mind that the U.S. Food & Drug Administration (FDA) will likely formally be regulating these products in the future, as it already does tobacco, the partners have implemented an extensive system of quality measures.

simply no guideline out there or book for anybody to know how to grow this crop," says Rouse, adding that Howard has undertaken extensive trial and error efforts in order to gain the expertise to grow and distribute the product.

Currently the partnership has 24 highly sophisticated automatic green-houses, each about 50 feet wide by 200 to 250 feet long, affording plenty of capacity to expand production. Rouse says it's one of the most expensive, multi-million-dollar operations in the U.S.

All domestic hemp production fa-

grow hemp, process it, and sell it," explains Rouse, noting that as a longtime tobacco manufacturer, he's fully knowledgeable of all of the compliance issues with FDA. "We want to make sure that consumers receive a quality and safe product that they will enjoy using, and to help them enjoy a better lifestyle."

Legal analysts note that manufacturers, distributors and retailers of hemp products still must comply with state controlled substance laws, which can vary widely. And the FDA quickly issued a reminder that already has the authority to regulate products containing cannabis or cannabis-derived compounds under the Federal Food, Drug and Cosmetic Act, triggering violations if unapproved products are marketed or sold with unsubstantiated therapeutic claims. Likewise, marketing hemp-derived CBD products as a dietary supplement is unlawful since CBD is an active ingredient in FDA-approved drugs that were subject to clinical investigations prior to such marketing practices. Within those parameters, the CBD market is quickly expanding.

> We control and identify every batch of our products produced with associated numbers, we get everything checked by a third party, and we have what we call COA reports that are put on our website associated with that batch. We have full disclosure."

"We control and identify every batch of our products produced with associated numbers, we get everything checked by a third party, and we have what we call COA reports that are put on our website associated with that batch. We have full disclosure."

Certificates of authenticity (COA) convey the product's legitimacy, conveying that they are tested and of top quality. "Simply put is, there is absolutely no better product grown on the market than the products that we're producing in these greenhouses. There's

cilities are operated under the federal guidelines of the Agricultural Improvement Act of 2018 (aka the 2018 farm bill), which made hemp—cannabis with less than .3 percent THC, the psychoactive component pf marijuana—much closer to an ordinary agricultural commodity rather than • Schedule 1 controlled substance. Individual states are required to develop and file plans the must be approved by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) approval prior to commercial farming.

"That gave us the opportunity to

THE GROWING PRODUCT LINEUP

Crystal Coast Infusion is the company's branded product, a line of "full-spectrum" CBD oils (tinctures) which contain many cannabinoids (including CBD) and terpenes. "What that simply means is that this is the highest quality of hemp products and CBD products on the market," Rouse explains. Packaged in dropper-top bottles, they are available in 500 mg (10 ml), 750 mg (15ml), and 1500 mg

(30ml) portions, with each size bottle containing 50mg of CBD per milliliter of liquid. Natural, Peppermint, Tangerine, Vanilla, and Wildberry versions are offered, as well as formulations for pets and equine, a salve, lotion, and muscle freeze lotion, and patches. The company is in the process of adding gummies, cones, and prepared hemp buds with CBD oil, and says it will increase the line to meet whatever demand arises.

With so many types of retailers adding CBD to their product mix, are tobacco retailers a viable sales channel? Rouse is certain they are.

"We believe that this is going to be an alternative opportunity for retailers and tobacco shops around the country to make an additional product, a cash product, in association with tobacco. Each one will go hand-in-hand," says Rouse. "If retailers are not into this in one fashion or another, they are going to be looking at doing it because it is a profit opportunity." Rouse says his goal is to get the product out to distributors and retailers based on volume, retaining only a only a small percentage, but that the profit margins for retailers could be as high as 50 percent.

The company also offers private label services to retailers and distributors. "We made our niche in the tobacco industry doing private label for tobacco companies, retailers, distributors, with their own branding, because they wanted to have their own product and name on the products," says Rouse of his tobacco company, M&R Holdings. He's offering the same access to his CBD products through NCD's private labeling capabilities. "We're making it accessible to everyone that wants to have their own product, but using our branded CBD oils and products," says Rouse. "We can make an extensive range of products for them with their branding-whatever they want to do."

Currently there are no minimum orders since NCD operate its production and packaging operations in-house. "We're making it accessible to every retail and outlet shop out there in the United States that would like to have their own branded product that sets them apart from someone down the street."

For retailers curious about entering the segment, Rouse suggests visiting









Carolina Hemp Products of Kinston, N.C., has converted tobacco seedling greenhouses into state-of-the-art hemp growing facilities, where plants are raised in their entirety, from seedling to mature plants prior to harvesting. The facility is the exclusive joint venture producer of Crystal Coast Infusion CBD products, distributed by North Carolina Distribution (NCD).

NCDHemp.com to peruse the extensive list of literature available on both CBD and hemp products. The company's associate, Dr. Holly Parker, also has a physician's guide to CBD products available for download, and there's a video of the company's farming and production operations.

"The reason I got into this business was I wanted to help folks," Rouse stresses. "I wasn't exactly sure which avenue or road to take. When people starting talking about CBD products, I was ■ little skeptical." Rouse says he had a personal issue and is now a believer.

"I can't make any claims regarding health claims for CBD products or hemp," Rouse reiterates. "However, we want the consumers to be the judge of the product. Try it, and I believe that they are going to come back and be a customer of these retail stores ongoing.

Bottom line, if a retailer's not into this, he's missing the boat. And they need to keep in mind of a difference in products on the market."

With a growing crowd of small operators entering the segment, "flying by the seat of their pants," Rouse says they simply don't have the resources and capability of producing a quality product that meets, or will meet FDA guidelines. Together, Rouse and Howard's combined multi-generational expertise and long-standing established business offer industry channels a trusted partner for those who want to enter the channel.

North Carolina Distribution, LLC (NCD), P.O. Box 403, Pink Hill, NC 28572, Tel: (252) 568-7418, Email: sales@ ncdhemp.com, Web: ncdhemp.com or shop.ncdhemp.com to place online wholesale orders.

A Quick Look Back

Regulating premium cigars with a retroactive cutoff date only adds insult to the already baseless injury of FDA's inept attempt at goal-oriented regulation. >BY JOHN GEOGHEGAN

here's no such thing as 'recent history.' It's either recent, or it's history. Can't be both. Recent events is a more accurate description of what's going on when it's still too soon to figure out what really happened. For example, to qualify as history, there has to be enough distance to provide us with some perspective on unintended consequences and what we missed right under our noses. This only reveals itself over time.

Ten years ago on June 22, 2009, the Family Smoking Prevention and Tobacco Control Act (TCA) became law. There was great rejoicing that the "gateway to a lifetime of tobacco addiction for our nation's youth is finally closed." By 2011, teen smoking had increased slightly, and menthol cigarettes (excused from the statute law because they created \$5 billion a year in tax revenue) were more popular among teens than adults. Flavored cigarettes, which were held up as the satanic ritual of teen smoking, turned out to be no more than 2/10ths of 1% of the market. We are just now beginning to measure the impact and consequences of the TCA.

In 2016, the FDA added premium imported cigars to the list of regulated to-bacco products. They still used February 15, 2007, a nine-year gap by that time, as a cutoff date for market presence of imported cigars. The FDA claimed deeming authority based on regulations they wrote themselves. There was no mention of premium imported cigars in the statute law. Now it's 2019 and time is beginning to provide some historical perspective.

Five years after the cigar industry tried to explain their business to the FDA during the 2014 commentary period, ensuing events show pretty clearly that the FDA had no clue what the cigar business was. That's finally becoming apparent, with the number of congressmen and senators who are validating the legitimacy of the premium cigar industry. In addition,

aspects of the intended statute law were contorted by FDA regulation to meet the goals of the anti-tobacco advocates.

Now it's 2019 and 2007 is 12 years in the past. Time is now revealing, among other things, the arbitrary and capricious nature of the February 2007 demarcation as it applied to premium cigars.

As most readers here know, the heart of the premium cigar business is invention. The industry adjusts to changing nature from year to year, season to season, and crop to crop. Innovations in taste and size are needed to keep up with competitive trends. From country to country and even valley to valley, different soil and rainfall produce different tastes from genetically identical leaf. New blends are improvised to deliver something a little different. Packaging needs to deliver fewer or more cigars per box as market demand dictates.

This is all fine as long as all of it was already on the market 12 years ago.

Here's a story. Ten years ago, a brand of cigars 1 am close to came to the market. Over time, the brand gained a quirky reputation. The quality of wrapper, blend, and binder got better. Cigar smokers liked its complex taste accents and flavors. You could buy it in 5-packs and larger boxes. It became unique over time by where and how it was made, when it was smoked, and how it was perceived.

In 2009, (before the TCA was signed, I might add) starting two years after February 2007 didn't seem like such a big deal. Substantial Equivalency and grandfathered status were in the future.

Now it's 2019.

After injunctions, lawsuits, FDA compliance date changes, more court rulings, and the uncertainty of further guidance changes, this nice little premium cigar brand with a distinctive blend and taste needs to change or die. FDA rules state that after 10 years on the market it can only stay if it abandons who and what it is, and becomes exactly the same as another brand that has been 'in commerce' for 12 years. Two years difference. 2007 vs. 2009. No notable difference or compliance standard for nicotine delivery. The FDA just wants a record on file. What's wrong with this picture?

I recently had lunch with a friend from one of the tobacco testing labs engaged in testing TNCO and HPHCs in cigars. My question was: Considering a range of 50 or so similarly sized premium cigars, close in weight, same ring gauge and length, banded, cello wrapped and boxed product, all close to one another in product specs, what is the percent range of difference in nicotine content between products? The answer is: We don't know.

So I tried again. Given the range of sizes of premium cigars, what are the specs and limits set by the FDA for nicotine content per premium handmade cigars? Is it tied to weight? Length? Number of sticks in the box? The answer? There aren't any rules or standards.

How does this exist after ten years of tobacco regulation?

So here we are with 10 years of historical perspective, and three years of premium cigar industry chaos, with little to show for it except that a perfectly good cigar brand is about to be wrecked by forcing it to be exactly like another brand. This is wrong.

How do we fix this? A good place to start would be for Congress to amend the TCA by indexing "grandfather dates" for various tobacco categories to each start date of deeming authority by FDA. That would provide relief from an enormous financial burden on smaller U.S. cigar companies. It might also ensure the future employment of thousands of tobacco workers and cigar craftsmen in countries with economies tied to ours.

FDA might also consider using the mountain of lab results already on hand to set a system of compliance standards. We already know what chemicals are in tobacco leaves. The EPA has the list. It's 11 pages long. Set some standards. Congress needs to do something. It's not about us. It's about them. They wrote the law. We can help.



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Inching Closer to a Prohibition Mentality

Beverly Hills, California ushers in a new era that threatens the enjoyment of a fine cigar. >BY J. GLYNN LOOPE

etween 1920 and 1933, America experienced the renowned period of Prohibition. With the grassroots movement against alcohol led by the Woman's Christian Temperance Union and the Anti-Saloon League, the United States government enacted its sweeping ban. Even though the federal government did not prohibit private ownership and consumption, some local and state governments went as far as banning actual possession.

Flash forward to June 22, 2009. The President of the United States signs the Family Smoking Prevention and Tobacco Control Act, giving the U.S. Food & Drug Administration sweeping regulatory powers over all things tobacco. Although they are prohibited from any outright ban on a product, they can create barriers that make the introduction of new products virtually impossible. However, there is a little known codicil in the act that allows local and state governments the authority to implement more stringent ordinances and legislation on tobacco, especially in the arena of sales and distribution restrictions.

Just as January 16, 1919 with the prohibition era 18th Amendment to the Constitution ratification, or the June 22, 2009 signing of the Tobacco Control Act, perhaps June 4, 2019 should also be enshrined in the annals of nanny state history. It was on that evening that the City Council of Beverly Hills, California became the first jurisdiction in America to ban the sale of tobacco within its community.

Twenty-eight local businesses that sell perfectly legal tobacco products will be prohibited from doing so. Now, at least in many cigar circles, most know that the city council heard the plea to exempt two premium eigar shops and a private cigar club. For that, we are grateful-concerned about the attack on free markets, private property rights, and personal choice, but grateful. Cigar Rights of America endorsed the request for those exemptions, and released a petition to City Council making that request, as well.

The most renowned plea for exemption came from former California Governor and cigar enthusiast Arnold Schwarzenegger. Writing for the Grand Havana Room cigar club, the Governor stated that the club "provides a treasured home away from home where community members, businessmen and business women, artists, authors, educators, film makers, priests, pastors, rabbis, doctors, lawyers, and political leaders all gather, and where they can share the company of one another over the enjoyment of a fine cigar."

The Governor also noted that the club was "an altogether rare venue... where the sharing of a meal, drink, and premium cigar promotes camaraderie, relaxation, and the healthy exchange of ideas and experiences."

To me, I guess that makes virtually every cigar shop and lounge in the nation a "rare venue." Of the 327 million people in America, maybe three million are occasional cigar consumers, and of the 2,000 or so premium cigar shops, less than that with a lounge or cigar bar-I would say they are each rare, unique, and should be recognized as nothing less than sanctuary for those among us that wish to gather for such moments as the Governor described.

We would like to use Governor Schwarzenegger's message as a form letter for such battles confronted by every cigar shop across the nation, because our prediction is that Beverly Hills just set a horrible national precedent for local governments across the nation to entertain similar ordinances. And it has begun.

On a 4-1 vote within a week of, and based upon the action in Beverly Hills, the City Council of Manhattan Beach, Calif. started the process of drafting their own tobacco sales ban. Councilman Steve Napolitano called it "a logical next step," following banning smoking in all public places. Of course, governments have a creative way of defining "public place," you know, to mean a private place of business.

Bad ideas have a way of spreading fast in the arena of tobacco politics. Especially at this juncture, with the legislative plate being full for the industry with state and national issues, the last thing America's cigar shops (and consumers) need is a city hall to city hall slate of proposals and ordinances, where free enterprise has to be defended, proverbial exemptions have to be justified, choices limited, entrepreneurship stifled, and a new era of prohibition launched.

CRA is currently working with a coalition of cigar shops in the St. Louis, Missouri region in an effort to prevent a smoking ban, due to the consistent threat of a public referendum. We call it "Operation Sanctuary," because America's cigar shops are truly becoming the last refuge from the agenda of the nanny state.

For them, the cigar shops and lounges of America, these "rare venues" for camaraderie, conversation, and relaxation, need to be defended in a manner that makes them non-negotiable in such battles—that local and state governments will not ban the enjoyment of premium cigars in such defined places of business, nor threaten the sale of great premium handmade cigars. All it takes is one Michael Bloomberg to enable "The Beverly Hills Model" to be bankrolled and spread across the nation, and the next wave of battles truly begins.

Perhaps it's time to use some language of the Constitution for our side, for a change—Congress shall make no law respecting or prohibiting the right of the people peaceably to assemble. The Freedom of Assembly seems central to the passion for cigars.

J. Glynn Loope is Executive Director of Cigar Rights of America (CAA).









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Caught in the Crosshairs? A Regulatory Relief Fight

A challenge to the President's "two-for-one" limit on federal regulations could expand tobacco regulations.

>BY ROBERT S. CLAIBORNE, JR. & BRYAN M. HAYNES

hat can the President do to reduce costs to businesses seeking to comply with federal regulations? That is at issue in Public Citizen, Inc., et al. v. Trump, et al., No. 1:17cv-253 (D.D.C.), a challenge to President Trump's "two-for-one" executive order.

The case has broader implications for various federal agencies and their regulations, including tobacco regulations. The case could implicate the extent of the Food & Drug Administration's (the "FDA") regulation under the Family Smoking Prevention and Tobacco Control Act (the "TCA").

EXECUTIVE ORDER 13771

On January 30, 2017, President Trump issued Executive Order 13771, entitled: "Reducing Regulation and Controlling Regulatory Costs" (hereafter, the "Executive Order"). The purpose of the Executive Order is to manage the regulatory and compliance costs and burdens

imposed on private parties.

The Executive Order's main requirements are that:

- a federal agency proposing or promulgating a new regulation must identify at least two existing regulations for repeal;
- any new costs associated with a federal agency's new regulation must be offset by eliminating costs associated with at least two existing regulations; and
- a federal agency's incremental costs (for issuing new regulations and repealing regulations) are annually capped.

The Office of Management and Budget (OMB) has since issued guidances for implementing the Executive Order: an interim guidance dated February 2, 2017, and a final guidance dated April 5, 2017. The guidances limit the Executive Order's application to "significant" federal regulatory actions and guidance documents, meaning that they have an annual

effect of \$100 million or more on the economy or meet certain other criteria.

Eight days after the Executive Order's issuance, a complaint was filed challenging it and the OMB guidances in the U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia.

PLAINTIFFS' INITIAL COMPLAINTS

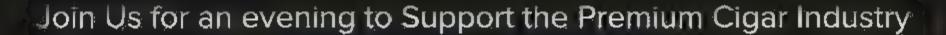
The plaintiffs are Public Citizen, Inc.; the Natural Resources Defense Council, Inc.; and the Communications Workers of America, AFL-CIO. The initial complaint named the President, the United States, the OMB director, and the heads of thirteen federal agencies as defendants. In the initial complaint filed February 8, 2017, the plaintiffs forwarded claims that:

- the Executive Order violates the constitutional principle of the separation of powers;
- the Executive Order violates the "Take Care Clause" under Article II, § 3 of the Constitution (requiring that the President "take care that the laws be faithfully executed");
- federal agencies lack authority to follow the Executive Order;
- OMB lacks authority to issue guidance concerning the Executive Order; and
- the Executive Order violates the Administrative Procedure Act.

The plaintiffs asked the Court to declare the Executive Order and OMB guidances unlawful and to enjoin the defendants from implementing or complying with them.

IMPLICATIONS FOR FDA TOBACCO REGULATION

Although the case is not directly focused on tobacco regulation, it could have implications for the FDA's regulation of the tobacco industry. A number of tobacco-focused organizations have been participating in the case as amici curiae in support of the plaintiffs. Among them are the Public Health Law Center, the American Academy of Pediatrics, the Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids, the Public Health Advocacy Institute, the Public Health & Tobacco Policy Center, and the Truth Initiative.



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In a brief filed with the Court, these organizations have argued that the Executive Order deters the FDA from issuing new regulations and threatens the existence of existing regulations under laws including the TCA.

For instance, these organizations contend that the Executive Order "stops regulations in their tracks if they were not finalized before January 20, 2017" and cite as a "prime example" the FDA's "proposed 'NNN rule' that would regulate • specific carcinogenic compound in smokeless tobacco products (like snuff and chewing tobacco)." They argue that, under the Executive Order, promulgation of the NNN rule would require the FDA "to swap other public health protections (without regard to the statutorily mandated public health considerations) or find other duly-promulgated rules to eliminate within HHS more broadly."

They also argue that the Executive Order complicates the promulgation of certain rules that are required by the TCA and that are now overdue under the TCA. They cite overdue regulations or guidances required concerning modified risk to-bacco products; tobacco product constituents, ingredients, and additives; and color graphics and text warnings for cigarette packaging and advertising. The organizations complain that the Executive Order presents an additional "hurdle" of identifying two regulations to repeal for each such rule. Further, "[t] he FDA could be forced to trade tobacco control for" priorities under other provisions of the Food, Drug & Cosmetic Act.

THE FEDERAL COURTS' STANDING REQUIREMENT

A critical issue in Public Citizen, Inc. v. Trump is the plaintiffs' "standing." Standing is a requirement that the plaintiff has suf-

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fered a sufficient injury in fact, which is fairly traceable to the defendant's challenged conduct and which is capable of being redressed by the Court. A generalized policy grievance will not suffice. If the plaintiff lacks standing, the Court lacks jurisdiction to hear or resolve the dispute.

When an organization is plaintiff, it can seek to establish "organizational standing" in its own right. Alternatively, it could establish "associational standing" if (among other criteria) one of its members would otherwise have standing.

The standing issue has been a significant one in Public Citizen v. Trump. Several different rulings having been issued by the Court so far, and the question remains unresolved.

FIRST AMENDED COMPLAINT DISMISSED FOR LACK OF STANDING

On May 12, 2017, the defendants filed a motion to dismiss the plaintiffs' first amended complaint, arguing a lack of standing. As there were no individual plaintiffs, the plaintiff organizations tried to establish associational standing or, alternatively, standing in their own right as organizations. The Court granted the motion to dismiss on February 26, 2018.

Seeking to establish associational standing, the plaintiffs contended that the Executive Order would prevent or delay "an array of regulatory actions." The prevented or delayed regulatory action, the plaintiffs argued, would harm their members by preventing safety or other measures that might otherwise mitigate the dangers of certain products or services. The Court was not convinced. The main problem was that the plaintiffs failed to plausibly allege that any regulations ostensibly prevented or delayed by the Executive Order would substantially increase the risk of harm to the members or cause the members to face a substantial probability of such harm.

On organizational standing, the plaintiffs argued that the Executive Order has a "chilling effect" on their missions to encourage federal agencies to adopt regulations they advocate. The Court also rejected this argument. The Executive Order did not itself chill any advocacy by the plaintiffs, who would merely have to evaluate the two-for-one tradeoff in deciding how to advocate.

Finding that the plaintiffs lacked standing, the Court dismissed the first amended complaint but allowed the plaintiffs to file another amended complaint seeking to cure the defects in standing.

SECOND AMENDED COMPLAINT WITHSTANDS DISMISSAL; PLAINTIFFS DENIED SUMMARY JUDGMENT ON STANDING

The plaintiffs filed a second amended complaint on April 2, 2018. The defendants again moved to dismiss, challenging the plaintiffs' standing. The plaintiffs also filed a motion for summary judgment to the effect that they had affirmatively established standing. In a decision dated February 8, 2019, the Court denied both motions.

This time, the plaintiffs had alleged standing sufficient to withstand the motion to dismiss. They identified a delayed regulation that plausibly caused some members a sufficient injury based on an inability to purchase and access certain services that would have been required by the regulation. In denying the plaintiffs' motion for summary judgment, however, the

Court determined that their standing remained a subject of genuine dispute for later resolution.

The difference in the Court's rulings stemmed from differing procedural standards. The plaintiffs faced a "far more demanding standard" in seeking to affirmatively establish standing on summary judgment.

CASE STATUS

A federal court cannot reach the merits of a case unless the plaintiff has standing, and standing remains a genuinely-disputed question in the litigation. Following the rulings in connection with the second amended complaint, the Court allowed discovery on the question of standing. Since then, the parties have filed cross-motions for summary judgment on the same question.

Should the Court find that the plaintiffs have standing in this case, it will move toward the merits stages in which the Court will be presented with the question whether the Executive Order, the guidances implementing it, and the federal agencies' adherence to it are lawful. Should it find a lack of standing, it will dismiss the case.

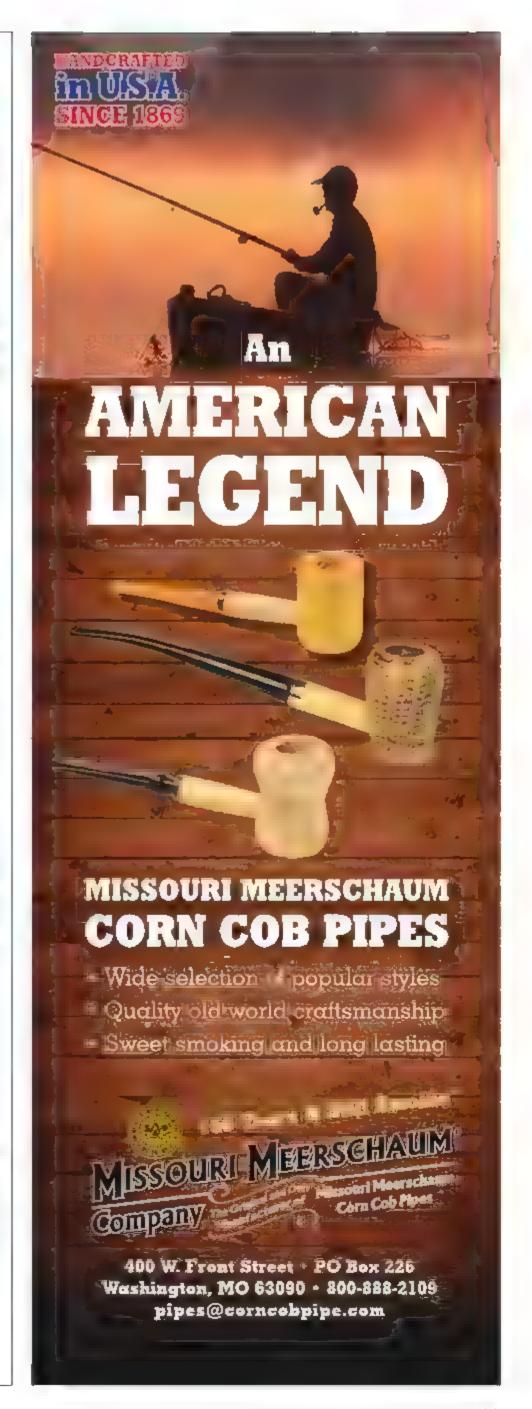
IMPLICATIONS FOR LITIGATION ARISING OUT OF TOBACCO REGULATION

As with the plaintiffs in Public Citizen v. Trump, plaintiffs in other cases have filed challenges to the FDA's regulatory action or inaction concerning tobacco, even though the plaintiffs themselves were not subject to the FDA's regulatory authority under the TCA. And as the Court has acknowledged in Public Citizen v. Trump, "[i]t is relatively easy to establish standing when you are the regulated party; it is more difficult to do so when the government fails to regulate the conduct of someone else."

In cases filed by plaintiffs concerning tobacco regulation "of someone else," the standing decisions have come down on both sides. For instance, in Sproule v. FDA, et al., No. 9:17-cv-80709 (S.D. Fla.), the Count found that an individual plaintiff lacked standing to challenge the FDA's agreement with a tobacco-product manufacturer resolving modified risk tobacco product issue. In contrast, in American Academy of Pediatrics, et al. v. FDA, et al., No. 8:18-cv-00883 (D. Md.), the Court found that organizational plaintiffs had standing to challenge FDA guidance extending deadlines for tobacco-product manufacturers' submission of premarket tobacco product applications.

Standing decisions are fact-specific and can be difficult. What seems to be clear, however, is that persons not regulated by the federal regulatory decisions they challenge will continue to challenge them. This is particularly true in the tobacco industry, and the ultimate outcome in the challenge to President Trump's "two-for-one" executive order will have implications for both ongoing challenges by third parties to FDA tobacco regulations, as well as the FDA's ability to implement new tobacco regulations.

Troutman Sanders Tobacco Team, Troutman Sanders LLP, 1001 Haxall Point, Richmond, Va. 23219, Tel: (804) 697-1420, Fax: (804) 697-6042, Web: troutmansanders.com, Email: bryan.haynes@troutmansanders.com.





Federal Court Rules on FDA Product Application Deadlines

Both the FDA and the industry find themselves in a tough spot at the hand of a Federal court, which overruled delayed deadlines for new product applications and sped up the process. >BY THOMAS BRIANT

Judge Paul Grimm issued a decision in favor of a coalition of public health groups that will require makers and importers of electronic cigarettes—and certain other tobacco products like cigars and pipe tobacco—to submit product applications to the FDA's Center for Tobacco Products within ten months. In response, acting FDA Commissioner Ned Sharpless announced that FDA stood ready to accelerate the review of these new tobacco product applications.

Under the revised application timetable, Pre-Market Tobacco Authorization (PMTA) submissions for electronic cigarettes and Substantial Equivalence (SE) applications for cigars and pipe tobacco products must both be filed with the FDA by May 11, 2020 in order for products currently on the market to remain on the market pending review. Three major cigar industry associations – the Cigar Association of America, the Premium Cigar Association, and the Cigar Rights of America – fought to maintain the original extended deadlines as previously adjusted by the FDA.

In August 2016, the FDA expanded the reach of the Family Smoking Prevention and Tobacco Control Act (the Act) to include cigars, pipe tobacco, electronic cigarettes, hookah tobacco and dissolvable tobacco products. Under the Act, any newly deemed tobacco product that was not on the market as of February 15, 2007 or for which a SE or PMTA application had not been filed and approved by the FDA since the February 15, 2007 date, was technically not compliant to sell in the U.S.

In the initial deeming rule in 2016, the FDA provided 12-month, 18-month or 24-month time periods within which companies could file SE or PMTAs for the new products. In 2017, then-FDA Commissioner Scott Gottlieb extended the product application deadlines twice, ultimately to August 2021 for combustible tobacco (cigars, pipe tobacco and hookah) and to August 2022 for non-combustible products (electronic cigarettes). This extension allowed the manufacturers to keep their newly deemed products on the

market while SE or PMTA applications were compiled.

A coalition of tobacco control and public health organizations (the American Academy of Pediatrics, the Maryland Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics, the American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network, the American Heart Association, the American Lung Association, the Campaign for Tobacco Free Kids, the Truth Initiative and several doctors) challenged the FDA's deadline extensions in federal court in March 2018, claiming the deadline extensions exceeded the authority granted to the FDA under the Tobacco Control Act. Judge Grimm ruled in favor of the plaintiffs and ultimately ordered the deadlines moved up.

In responding to the Court and proposing remedies, the coalition of health and tobacco control groups pushed for a deadline shorter than the 120 days issued by the Court, but have largely supported the decision to move up the deadlines and the Court specifically mandating that application review from the FDA be completed within a year following submissions.

Despite deeming cigars, pipe tobacco, hookah and electronic cigarettes as tobacco products within the jurisdiction of the Tobacco Control Act in 2016, it was not until earlier this year that the FDA issued a proposed final guidance on market application deadlines. NATO submitted public comments with concerns about the proposed guidance and its ambiguities and impacts on retailers of combustible and non-combustible tobacco products. The guidance has yet to be finalized. With a considerable number of registrations for new vapor products and a likely significant number of PMTA and SE applications to consider for cigars and pipe tobacco, it remains to be seen how FDA might expedite its process to meet the deadlines set by Judge Grimm.

Thomas Briant is executive director of the National Association of Tobacco Outlets (NATO), Toll-free: (866) 869-8888, Web: www.natocentral.org.





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100 CUPDATE *** MERCHANDISE & NEWS FROM THE PIPE WORLD

Tobacconist Reserve Ltd., B&M-Only Blends from Sutliff Tobacco Co.

Sutliff Tobacco Company, America's oldest pipe tobacco manufacturer, has launched Tobacconist Reserve Ltd. tobaccos packaged in 1.75 oz tins and launching in two debut mixtures. The series is only available to brick & mortar retailers direct from the manufacturer, and is not sold online or through distribution channels.

Virginia Blend is a unique straight Virginia crumble kake made with matured red Virginias from three different continents that are pressed and sliced.

Blend 07 in a mixture of stoved black, sweet Cavendish and bright yellow Virginias topped with a citrus flavor.

Sutliff Tobacco/Mac Baren, Richmond, Va., Tel: (704) 796-3520, Web: sutliff-tobacco.com.



Missouri Meerschaum's Independence Day Pipe Tobacco Returns

The newest version of Missouri Meerschaum's Independence Day Blend is a must-try, according to the manufacturer. Although different from the 2015 version, this intriguing U.S.A.-made aromatic English blend is an ideal match-up for any Missouri Meerschaum corncob pipe. A soft aromatic blend, it has vanilla profile leading the way with a light splash of Cyprian Latakia to add a smoky note. Packaged in 1.5oz tins, suggested retail, \$12.

Missouri Meerschaum Company, Washington, Mo., Tel: (636) 239-2109, Fax: (636) 239-2195, Email: pipes@corncobpipe.com, Web: corncobpipe.com

▶ Seattle Pipe Club Creates Latest Blend, Wild Man

The Seattle Pipe Club and their master blender, Joe Lankford, continue to broaden their range of smoking mixtures with the release of Wild Man. This medium-bodied blend of rich and smoky Cyprian Latakia, complex and exotic Orientals, and select, sweet Virginias have been pressed

into an easy-to-prepare crumble cake. "The aroma will remind you of incense, but the flavor is smooth, smoky, and intriguingly unique," says the distributor. Packaged in 202 reclosable tin, suggested retail, \$18.50.

Meier & Dutch, Bethlehem, Pa., Toll-free: (888) 872-4427, Web: meierdutch.com.

G.L. Pease Releases Penny Farthing Shag Cut

Artisanal tobacco blender Gregory Pease has released his first new blend in nearly two years, the first shag cut presented in his G.L. Pease range, called Penny Farthing. "It's taken a long time to get this one just right, including the cut," explains Pease,

who's blends are crafted by Cornell & Diehl.



"It's a true shag, about 32 cuts per inch, blended from bright and red Virginias, spiced with Louisiana Perique and In hint of fire-cured dark Kentucky. It's easy to pack, and easy to smoke, opening with a sophisticated sweetness, and evolving in depth and complexity throughout the bowl to a rich, satisfying finish."

Pease advised that because of the fine cut, the mixture can burn fast if desired, but he recommends taking one's time to allow the flavors to fully develop.

Cornell & Diehl / Laudisi Distribution Group, Inc., Longs, S.C., Tel: (843) 491-4150, Email: Sales@laudisi.com, Web: laudisi.com, cornellanddiehl.com.

· IM Corona Old Boy Now in Arabesque

Japan's IM Corona has added the new Arabesque design to its iconic soft flame

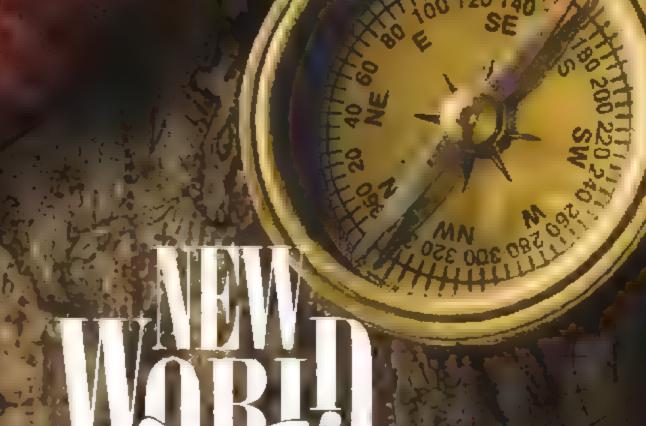


pipe lighter with removable tamper, offered in Silver (\$188 retail) and Black (\$208 retail) finishes.

Arango Cigar Co., Northbrook, Ill., Tel: (800) 222-4427, Email: sales@ arangocigarco.com.

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Brand NEWS >>> TOBACCO PRODUCTS & MANUFACTURER PROMOTIONS

Drew Estate Marks 20th Anniversary of ACID Cigars with Release of ACID 20

Drew Estate is celebrating the 20th Anniversary of the ACID Cigar brand with the national release of ACID 20, ■ 5 x 52 box-pressed robusto packaged in chrome boxes of 24 with ■ suggested retail of \$230.40. The cigar features a lush, toothy Mexican San



Andres wrapper, ultra-premium Indonesian binder, and filler leaves from Nicaragua. It's finished with an infusion that in "truly unique, and worthy of the double decade title," says the company; "the smoking experience will hit every region of your palate and your soul, a true masterpiece."

Fabien Ziegler Director of Consumer Engagement adds, "This is by far our greatest creation. The experiential impact of this cigar is without equal."

Jonathan Drew president and founder of Drew Estate, says "The ACID Cigar brand was born under the Manhattan bridge, on

the Brooklyn side of course, with a raw and honest vision of boundless freedom. Urban culture and massive style supercharged the ACID brand, shaking the foundation of the traditional cigar empires across the globe. ACID's impact was much more than just disruptive, as it essentially cracked the mainframe of the sleepy status quo. Over twenty years, we transformed from a scrappy little crew on Jay Street, Brooklyn to an organized, viral network of distinguished Diplomats rocking every street in America." Drew Estate, Miami, Fla., Tel: (786) 581-1800, Web: drewestate.com.

New Santa Muerte Barrio Santo from Black Label

Black Label Trading Co. (BLTC) has announced the release of Santa Muerte Barrio Santo, hand crafted in Esteli, Nicaragua at Fabrica Oveja Negra. Barrio Santo will be available exclusively at select BLTC retailer events.

"These cigars will be released as event only in limited quantities. It is a unique version of the original Santa Muerte blend with a maduro wrapper. I wanted something special for our retailers who host BLTC events and this cigar is exactly that," said James Brown, creator of BLTC and owner at Fabrica Oveja Negra.

The cigar is crafted from Nicaraguan, Dominican, and Mexican San Andrés filler and an Ecuador Habano binder and wrapper. It is offered in a single 5 1/2 x 48 Robusto size, presented in 20 count boxes, suggest retail \$10 each per stick.



"Black Label Trading Company is redefining the standards for cigar making. With a less is more philosophy, Black Label Trading Co. creates hand crafted premium cigars of the utmost quality."

Black Label Trading Co., Cameron, Texas, Tel: (210) 317-1198, Email: Stephanie@ blacklabeltrading.com, Web: OvejaNegraCigars.com, blacklabeltrading.com.



Villiger La Flor de Ynclan Adds Toro Size

Villiger Cigars has announced that the Villiger La Flor de Ynclan is now being offered in a new 6 x 52 Toro size. Chairman of the board

Heinrich Villiger and master blender Matias Maragoto, who created La Flor de Ynclan, came together again to tweak the highly rated, medium bodied blend for a new vitola, with both agreeing on the toro format.

"The Villiger La Flor de Ynclan seems to be a blend that we keep going back to," said Villiger, "Over ten Years ago Matias Maragoto and I began on this journey to create a blend that would pay homage to the pre-revolutionary style of Cuban cigars. Although, the brand has received many important accolades, I still felt that the blend can be an even better version of itself. We expect the Villiger La Flor de Ynclan in this new toro size to be an upgrade from the already highly rated robusto vitola."

The toro size comes in elegantly packaged 10 count boxes, suggested retail \$13 each.

Villiger North America, Miami, Fla., Tel: (604) 954-2398, Web: villigercigars.com

Cattle Baron Cigars Launches Maduro Blend

Cattle Baron Cigars, founded by Montana stockman Bryan Mussard, has extended it flagship Cattle Baron Habano cigar line with a new maduro version. Cattle Baron Maduro features the same blend of Dominican Republic seco and Nicaraguan viso fillers and Dominican Republic binder, but uses a Mexican San Andrés wrapper instead of Nicaraguan Habano. Both blends were developed by Mussard and master blend Phil Zanghi of Debonaire House, produced at the De Los Reyes factory in the Dominican Republic.

Cattle Baron Maduro debuts in three shapes in either 20-count cedar. boxes or 25-count bundles: Bull (4 1/2 x 58), \$9.49 each; Stockyard (5 x 52), \$8,49 each; and Trail Boss (6 x 54), \$9.99.

Cattle Baron Cigars, Dillon, Mt., Tel: (406) 683-6363,

Email: info@cattlebaroncigars.com, Web: cattlebaroncigars.com.





The Aquatico, the latest release in Marrero Cigar's Artístico Series, is a unique and flavorful Dominican puro with a 45 degree cut, featuring Habano 2020-Criollo 98-Corojo filler, 100% Dominican Puro, Olor binder, and Habano Rosado-Connecticut and Candela.

Marrero Cigars, marrerocigars.com.

Highclere Castle Victorian Debuts from Foundation

Foundation Cigar Company has announced the release of the Highelere Castle Victorian, joining the original Highclere Castle Cigar created by master-blender and cigar producer Nicholas Melillo which debuted in 2017.

The Highclere Castle Victorian is wrapped in Habano Ecuador, harkening back to the very first cigars to be imported into England in the Victorian era. The flavor profile was created as a tribute to the style of cigars most popular during Victorian times, when smoking rooms became the fashion in grand country homes and castles. The previously released Highclere Castle Cigar was designed when the Highclere archivist discovered letters and personal account records of the Carnaryon's cigar purchases in the early 1900s from dealers in London as well as the Ritz Hotel. Melillo subsequently crafted a cigar that reflects that historic flavor profile and smoking style.

The new Victorian is a "full-bodied cigar delivering notes of nougat, cedar, cinnamon, and leather," said Melillo. "This is some of the rarest and highest quality wrapper that I have been able to source, based on 20 years of building relationships with farmers and exceptional tobacco growers."

Highelere Cigar co-founder, Adam von Gootkin, added, "Partnering with [Melillo] to craft this masterpiece cigar speaks to his obsession with quality while embracing the rich history of enjoying cigars at Highclere Castle. His access to rare tobaccos and high-quality, by-hand production capabilities has led to this historic, award-winning line of cigars that we are incredibly proud to offer to connoisseurs."



THE CIGAR REVIEW



CATTLE BARON MADURO BULL

Cattle Baron Cigars

	COMMENTS	
AESTHETICS	It is big and stocky with a flat dark chocolate colored wrapper. The ring is a big much for me nearly 60, but the maduro wrapper is appealing.	
CONSTRUCTION	A firmly packed cigar considering the ring gauge no soft spots and the prelight draw is very good. The lighting was easy and the burn was good but it had to be touched up several times.	
FLAVOR AND STRENGTH	The flavors are very pleasant. I was expecting more of a sweetness from the wrapper but it never showed up, it is possible the large ring gauge the filers and binder overpower the wrapper.	
GENERAL COMMENTS	It is a tasty diger and would appeal to those who like dark wrappers, it is medium plus in body / strength.	



	BACKBROUND	ORIGIN	
	Cattle Baron debuted in 2016, featur-	Dominican Republic	
	ang iii Nicaraguan Habano wrapper. Brand owner Bryan Mussard—a	MAKER House of Dabonaire	
	Montana cattle rancher is cigar lover for over 30 years who raises some of the world's finest, high marbling Angus	FILLER Donvinican Seco, Nicaraguen Viso	
	bulls—has now expanded his flagship line with a new maduro wrapped ver- sion featuring a Mexican San Andrès	BINDER Dominican	
	wrapper and the same filter/binder blend developed by digar maker Phil	WRAPPER Mexican San Andrés	
n	Zanghi of House of Debonaire. The new blend debuts in three sizes.	51ZE 4 1/2 x 58	
	Mussard also created Gorgeous, a highly rated potato vodka.	PRICE \$9.49	

garcompany.com,

garcompany.com

Web: foundationci-

Productshowcase *** ACCESSORIES



>Xikar Adds XK1 Single Jet Lighter

Xikar has added a sporty new single jet lighter to its portfolio, the colorful XK1 that's offered in six matte-finish styles (black, blue, green, orange, red, and silver). The units feature ■ single action plunger ignition, an automatically activated burner lid, fuel level window, and an oversize flame adjustment wheel. Suggested retail price, \$39.99.

Quality Importers Trading Company, Weston, Fla., Toll-free: (888) 795-4839, Web: qualityimporters.com.

> Magpulse Cigar Cutter Now Shipping from Screwpop Tool

Screwpop has released its long-announced Magpulse Cigar Cutter, which capitalizes on the delicate balancing of dual magnetic forces of ultra-strong neodymium rare-earth mag-

nets together with a semi-friction break, that is designed for a controlled closing of the cutter. Simply press and hold the centralized trigger to experience Magpulse thrust open for the first time through "repulse" magnetic force phenomena. Once deployed, Magpulse stays in the open position using magnetic "attraction" onto small metal tabs that are embedded in the main body's trigger side. When releasing the trigger to



close the Magpulse, the trigger-stem functions as ■ "semifriction-break," with the force applied on the bottom face of the movable slider blade. This prevents the cutter from falling closed once the attraction force is broken. Together, the repulse, attraction, and semi-friction break work in harmony for smooth and controlled cigar tip cut. Manufactured using the latest and best in CNC milling technology from solid blocks of 6061T6 aerospace grade solid aluminum billets, each cutter body is finished with durable anodization for years of use and permanently sealed shut for life. The magnets will only degrade less than 1 percent over 100 years. Screwpop Tool, LLC, Lee's Summit, Mo., Tel./Fax: (816) 600-2855, Web: screwpoptool.com.

>Tommy Bahama Debuts Hula Paradise Collection

Anchoring the new Tommy Bahama Hula Paradise Collection from Island Lifestyle Importers is the limited release Hula Paradise Just Another Day in Paradise Humidor—a striking mahogany wood unit with a three-dimensional metal inlay featuring a Hula Girl strumming

ukulele that wraps around its top three sides, reminiscent of a premium cigar band. Il accommodates up to 50 cigars and includes internal humidification and a hygrometer. Suggested retail is \$175.

The Hula Paradise collection also includes a tabletop quad-torch cigar lighter (\$99.95, left), a portable dual-torch cigar lighter (\$85, center), a metal cigar cutter (\$75, right),

and a 610 travel cigar humidor (\$40).







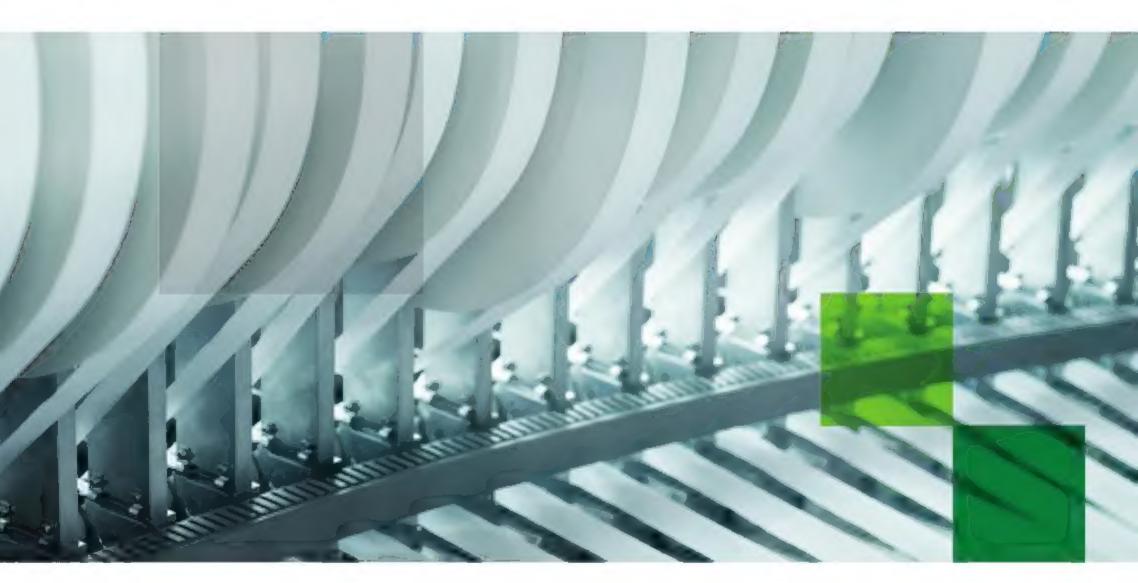
The lighters and cutters feature the exclusive Accu-Body-Cast-Design (ABCD) made to highlight the exclusive Tommy Bahama artwork. The 610 travel cigar humidor is a crush-resistant, air-tight, water-proof, floating case that will accommodate six Churchill or ten Robusto-sized cigars. "This new collection has such a great vibe," says Michael Giannini, General Manager for Ventura Cigars. "It brings the party to the gathering and inspires people to slow down and make time to enjoy the good life. Which, of course, includes a cigar or two. Come by our booth at IPCPR and check it all out."

Island Lifestyle Importers is the exclusive designer, manufacturer, and world-wide licensee of Tommy Bahama branded luxury cigar accessories, which are known for their innovative designs, cutting-edge technology, and island theme-inspired artwork. Ventura Cigar Company and Phillips & King International are the exclusive wholesale distributors of these new products, as well as the entire Tommy Bahama brand of cigar accessories, also providing wholesale marketing support for the brand.

Ventura Cigar Co., Moorpark, Calif., Toll-free: (800) 532-4427, Web: venturacigar.com.

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The company's factory in the Czech Republic is situated in the beautiful foothills of the Jeseniky Mountains in North Moravia. This mill with three paper machines was founded in 1861. The mill is fully upgraded and continually invests in the latest R&D facilities to improve its expertise. Environmental compliance is of prime importance and quality systems are certified with ISO 9001 and ISO 14001. Additionally, the raw materials responsibly sourced and certified by PEFC and FSC — Chain of Custody.

Roll4You has been a rolling paper specialist since 1910, producing customized products. Customers can choose

from regular to slow burning cigarette paper grades, made from a choice of fibres - wood, textile, mixed cigarette paper - in various weights, ranging from 12 g/m² up to 23 g/m². All in all, over 30 paper grades are at your disposal to choose from. And a rolling paper is not complete without an excellent gum - Acada or other Natural gums.

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- Shorts
- · Shorts Cut Corner
- Shorts Double Window Booklets
- 11/4, 11/2
- King Size Slim
- King Size Regular
- Rolls

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